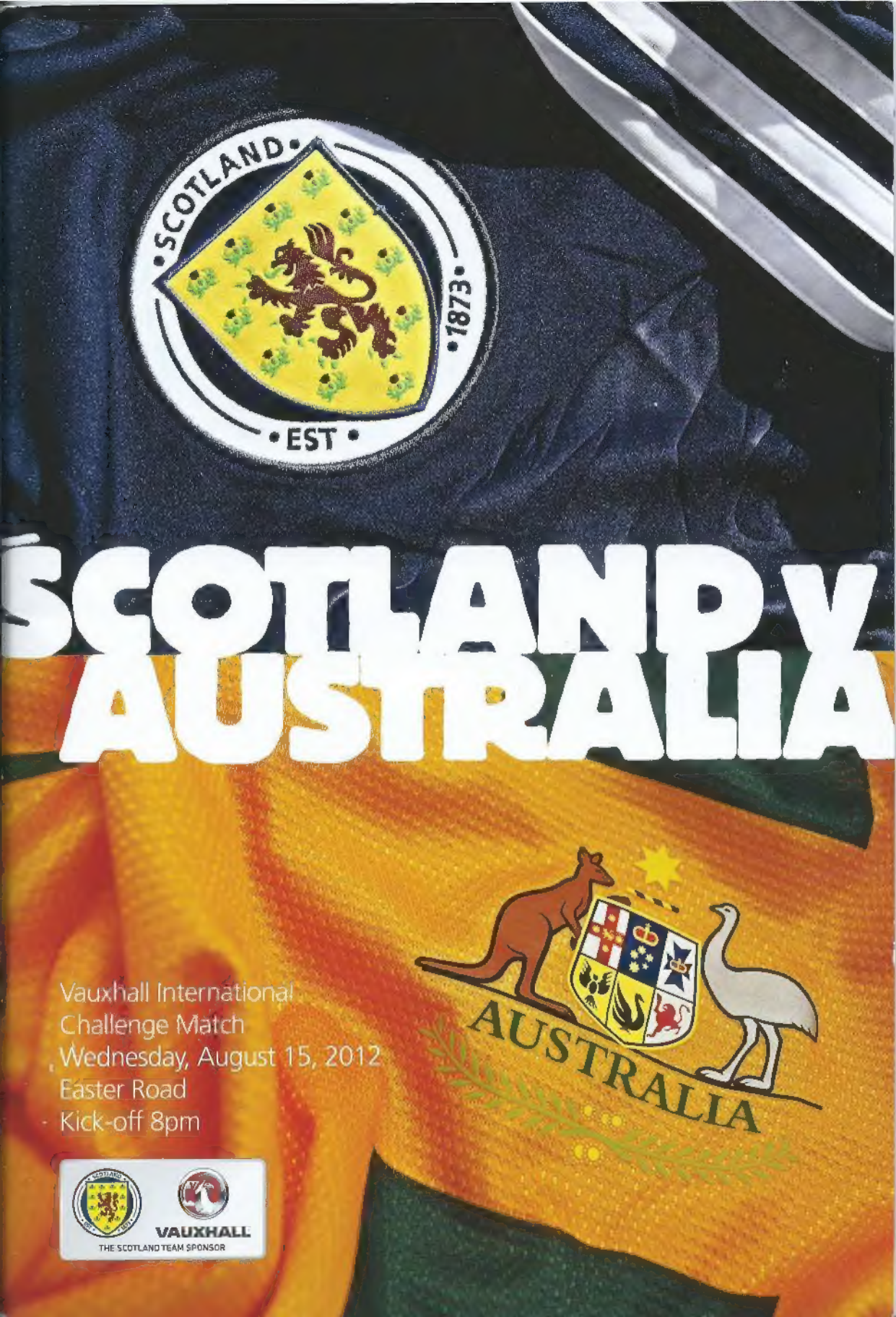
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Challenge Match
Wednesday, August 15, 2012
Easter Road
Kick-off 8pm
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FESTIVAL OF FOOTBALL

WELCOME

Good evening and welcome to Easter Road for tonight's Vauxhall International Challenge Match against Australia.

This represents our final preparation match for the FIFA World Cup 2014 Qualifiers and, therefore, it is important to finalise one or two areas before our opening double-header against Serbia and Macedonia at Hampden Park next month.

Firstly, I would like to apologise to all our supporters - and especially those who travelled to Jacksonville - for the manner of the defeat against the United States of America at the end of last season.

I believe it is hugely important to get the group together as often as possible and the opportunity to have a sunshine training camp was ideal. Ultimately, the difference in motivation for a team at the end of a long, hard domestic season and a team in the midst of a month-long camp for their own World Cup qualifiers was too great.

The players will be desperate to atone tonight but, while victory and a vast improvement in performance are required, it is more important we are ready for the qualifiers. Scottish football has endured a traumatic summer. That said, I firmly believe we are too quick to condemn our game while losing sight of the positives.

The voice of the supporters has been heard this summer and I urge all football fans, regardless of club allegiances, to unite behind us for this forthcoming campaign. Group A has neither an obvious runaway leader nor an apparent minnow.

"WHILE VICTORY AND A VAST IMPROVEMENT IN PERFORMANCE ARE REQUIRED, IT IS MORE IMPORTANT WE ARE READY FOR THE QUALIFIERS."

It is a group where points will be won and lost by all teams and that means we must take full advantage of our first two home games. The support of our fans can make the difference. I have been on record before as saying the atmosphere at Hampden Park in the second half against Spain was something I had never experienced before and was integral to that rousing comeback from two goals down against the world champions.

I am delighted that so many of you have already secured your Scotland Season Ticket for the campaign and on behalf of the squad and my backroom staff I thank you for your continued support. Those of us who have watched Scotland's athletes perform heroically at the Olympic Games - and watched Andy Murray win a gold medal after coming so close at Wimbledon - will know how much joy sporting success can bring.

My players will do their utmost to end Scotland's hiatus from a major championships. There would be no better feeling than qualifying for the World Cup in Brazil.That task will be made easier with your support. I was grateful to be invited to a meeting of the West of Scotland Tartan Army (WESTA) and enjoyed the opportunity to speak directly to the supporters who travel the world to share our dream of reaching a major tournament again.

The emergence of James Forrest, Barry Bannan and Jordan Rhodes gives me great encouragement for the future. Others such as Charlie Adam, Jamie Mackie, Craig-Mackail Smith and Phil Bardsley will have benefited greatly from a first full campaign. I am also delighted to see Steven Naismith back to full fitness.

The Scottish FA are also ready to launch seven Regional Performance Schools throughout the country, the crown jewels of the Performance Strategy and a commitment to elite talent development. Billy Stark's Under-21s remain in UEFA European Championship qualification contention, and so, too, Anna Signeul's Women's National Team.

There is much to be optimistic about in Scottish football and together we can make those challenges easier. Thank you for your attendance tonight and enjoy the game.

CRAIG LEVEIN

FROM TRAGEDY TO TRIUMPH

SIR ALEX FERGUSON RECALLS THE WORLD CUP QUALIFYING CAMPAIGN THAT CULMINATED IN VICTORY OVER AUSTRALIA

>> By Glenn Gibbons

If you're going to joust with giants, you might as well engage the services of a knight. The one the Scots keep at Old Trafford, Sir Alex Ferguson, these days may not make a hands-on contribution to the national team's endeavours in the field, but, wherever he goes and whatever company he keeps, he never misses an opportunity to ensure that the Caledonian cause is promoted in an authentic accent.

His credentials also feature that period of a career of unparalleled success which was devoted to leading Scotland to the World Cup finals, an achievement that makes his a legitimate voice in the seemingly perpetual debate on the country's ever-fluctuating fortunes.

In fact, tonight's visitors to Easter Road represent for the Manchester United manager (as well as the rest of the country, for that matter) the re-enactment of a fixture and a time that are movingly poignant - and for a number of reasons.

Australia were not only the opponents in Sir Alex's first match as manager of Scotland, but he was in charge of this vital play-off for a place at Mexico 1986 as a consequence of the fatal collapse of Jock Stein towards the end of the game against Wales in Cardiff that allowed them into the double-header in Glasgow and Melbourne.

In addition to these emotive aspects, the meeting with the Aussies is evocative of a time when the Scots reached the great football jamboree almost as a matter of course. The Tartan Army's invasion of Mexico was the fourth of what would be five such expeditions in a row from 1974, the last World Cup participation in 1998 making it a hardly credible six qualifications out of seven.

As Sir Alex himself is quick to emphasise, however, regular achievement should not be mistaken for a stroll in the park. Then the manager of a trophy-rich Aberdeen, his experiences as Stein's assistant through the series of group matches and, ultimately, at the helm for the play-off against Australia remain permanent reminders of the difficulties inevitably to be encountered in the dog-eat-dog business of earning the right to play with the world's elite.

"It was a tough group we were in from the moment the draw was made," he recalls. "We had Spain with all their usual natural talent, Wales, who were always stubborn opponents, and Iceland, whose tight little pitch in Reykjavik always made a visit there more uncomfortable than anyone would like.

"But we couldn't have made a better start, as we beat Iceland 3-0 and then Spain 3-1, both games at Hampden, as big Jock had wanted those home fixtures precisely for that reason - to get the kind of results that could put the wind up our rivals. It wasn't a disaster when we lost only 1-0 to Spain in Seville, as our next match was against Wales in Glasgow and we knew that winning that one would assure us of at least second place in the group and in a play-off for Mexico. It would also, of course, give us an outstanding chance of qualifying automatically as winners of the section.

"But if the defeat in Seville couldn't be called a serious set-back the one against the Welsh at Hampden certainly was. We chose that night not to be at our best and lost to a goal from Ian Rush. The result changed everything for us and turned a very promising position into a dark and threatening situation."

What would make the Scots' circumstances even more feverish in that eventful year was that Wales would beat Spain before what could be termed the Celtic showdown in Cardiff in September. This was a victory that would not only bring Spain back within reach, but would bring some alarm to a Scotland hierarchy who realised that defeat at Ninian Park in September would mean cancellation of the planned trip to Mexico.

On the other hand, the Scots' superior goal difference ensured that a draw would be sufficient at least to guarantee the runner-up spot and a play-off against Australia, winners of the Oceania area. Before that fateful collision in Cardiff, there was the potentially damaging visit to Reykjavik, an occasion whose recollection still fills Sir Alex with a curious mixture of nervousness and hilarity.

"On the very Saturday day we travelled to Iceland, we beat England in the Rous Cup at Hampden in the afternoon, " he said. "Well, you can imagine the buoyant mood we were in. It was the end of May and, late into the small hours, Jock and I were still sitting in broad daylight, talking about things.

"I told him we should celebrate and that he should join me in a glass of wine, but, of course, he had never drunk in his life and wasn't going to change now. Anyway, he said, we had very serious business ahead of us, and nobody should think the match against Iceland was going to be easy. He was convinced we were in for a hard time

"As usual, he wasn't wrong. In the match on the Wednesday, we found it very tough going. The Iceland lads were really up for it and worked like navvies to take something from the game. It didn't help when Graeme Souness launched into a tackle on Iceland's star player, the highly

promising teenager, Siggi Jonsson. It was a bad one, all right, and the next thing I know, the president of Akranes, the Icelandic football club, came down to the dug-out area, apparently looking to exact retribution by challenging Jock.

"The scary thing about him was that he was a giant, he looked about seven feet tall. I hear the shouts and look round and there's Steeley (Jimmy Steele, the Celtic and Scotland masseur) shaping up to spar with the giant and Jock shouting, 'Steeley, sit down, ya daft auld bugger'.

"Steeley must have already been in his seventies, but he was still intent on having a go at anyone about to threaten physical damage on his boss. Anyway, it was all settled as Jock, who could charm the birds off the trees when it was necessary, soon had the big guy eating out of his hand.

"Nothing was settled on the field, though, until four minutes from the end, when Jim Bett finally made the breakthrough with the only goal of the game. That was a very hard night that still causes me a bit of sweat. Without that victory, we would have been staying at home, instead of heading for Mexico, because a draw in Reykjavik would have meant we had to win in Cardiff.

"The match in Wales was fraught, as they led us and we were on our way out until less than 10 minutes from the end, when Davie Cooper scored with the penalty kick that got us the result we needed. It all ended in tragedy, of course, when Jock had a heart attack on the bench and died soon after.

"Our play-off with Australia was no walkover, either, as the first leg at home was into the second half before Coop and Frank McAvennie got the goals that gave us a 2-0 win. That sounds comfortable, but the travelling to Australia, and us going from a Scottish winter - this was December, remember - into an Australian summer. We had a few scares, especially in the first half, but Jim Leighton, our goalkeeper, made a few important saves and we saw out a scoreless draw."

Sir Alex, unsurprisingly, is as unhappy as any fan with Scotland's failure to qualify for a major tournament since that participation in France 14 years ago. He remembers the pain of the previous 16-year hiatus between 1958 and 1974, but is hopeful of a satisfactory conclusion to the campaign to reach Brazil in 2014.

"I've been watching the Scotland team the past couple of years and they do seem to be building up a good collection of midfield players," he said. "They have lads who have good vision and some who can score goals. That's always a very handy thing to have in your midfielders.

"I've spoken to Craig Levein a number of times and I must say I like the way he does about his work. I like his stubbornness, his determination to do things his way. Maybe he reminds me of me! But he is his own man and that's necessary in that particular job, because when you're in charge of a national team, you are on your own.

"I think if Craig could get a really top-class central defender and a quality striker to go with what he already has, it would make a big difference, it would bring more balance to a squad where the midfield is so strong. That's why I think it's a shame that Craig and Steven Fletcher haven't been able to reach a compromise.

"Fletcher is a very useful striker, the type the national team could always use. I think it would be good for the country if he were available for selection" ■

JIM LEIGHTON

FRANK McAVENNIE SCORES IN THE FIRST LEG

SCHOOLS OUT FOR WORLD CUP 2022

SCOTTISH FA LAUNCHES PERFORMANCE SCHOOLS

Tomorrow, six years of pilot schemes and painstaking preparations will culminate in the launch of seven Regional Performance Schools as part of the Scottish FA's commitment to elite talent development.

More than £15m has been committed over the next four years by the Scottish FA, with over 100 of the country's most promising male and female footballers benefiting from technical, tactical and lifestyle development by specially appointed Scottish FA coaches.

The schools are the crown jewels of the Performance Strategy overseen by Mark Wotte, the Scottish FA's first-ever Performance Director.

Performance Manager Neil Mackintosh has watched the likes of Paul McMullan and Craig Sibbald flourish from the pilot project at Graeme High School, and he believes the schools will enable Scotland to reach for the stars once again.

DARREN FLETCHER AND IFEOMA DIEKE AT THE LAUNCH OF THE SFA REGIONAL PERFORMANCE SCHOOLS.

"ULTIMATELY, I WANT TO SEE PERFORMANCE SCHOOL PLAYERS REPRESENTING SCOTLAND IN THE WORLD CUP IN QATAR IN 2022"

"Ultimately, I want to see Performance School players representing Scotland in the World Cup in Qatar in 2022," he said. "That has to be the objective. The Scottish FA has made a huge commitment and it is important we set out the extent of our ambitions from the outset."

While the costs are significant in setting up the programme at seven schools, Neil believes the benefits to talented young players will prove priceless.

The process began six years ago, when we put the first plans together for the pilot initiative at Graeme High School in Falkirk," he recalled. "That was a leap of faith, for the parents, the pupils, the schools, the teachers and the Scottish FA.

It has been a resounding success and the benefits of that investment is demonstrated through two young players who have represented their club and their country - Paul McMullan, of Celtic, and Craig Sibbald, of Falkirk.

The Regional Performance Schools are an extension of that pilot and a culmination of a lot of hard work. The benefits of the schools are obvious. Young players will get double the amount of training and that can only help them develop skills and fitness.

We conducted research with the help of Stirling University and as well as those sporting benefits there were also improvements in their commitment to the curriculum, overall health, and individual improvements in communication, time planning, problem solving, diet and effort."

Wotte and Mackintosh's first task was to consult with educational authorities and local councils for buy-in, which resulted in the schools across the country signing up. Braidhurst High School (Motherwell), Broughton High School (Edinburgh), Graeme High School (Falkirk), Grange Academy (Kilmarnock), Hazlehead Academy (Aberdeen), Holyrood Secondary School (Glasgow) and St John's High School (Dundee).

The next challenge was appointing a coach to each school. Ray McKinnon, the former Dundee United midfielder, Brian McLaughlin, the former Celtic winger, and Ian Ross, the former St Mirren player, have each been assigned to an RPS. Gordon Craig, Greg Miller, Iain Jenkins and Andrew Goldie bring a wealth of experience in youth coaching to complete the team, with a further appointment to be confirmed tomorrow.

"Mark Wotte summed it up when we recruited the coaches," said Mackintosh. "He said he was looking for football teachers, coaches who understand the need for young players to develop as people as well as players, to be caring, organised and open minded and allow these young players to flourish. We want to be cutting edge in everything we do and the coaches keep telling me they cannot wait to get started.

"The schools were selected based on criteria agreed with each local authority, including accessibility, travel times, school capacity, support and commitment of teachers and head teachers and, of course, facilities. Above all, the schools' ethos was important: it was vital that the teachers had a passion for football and understood what we collectively strive to achieve."

A series of football festivals throughout the country enabled the coaches to select up to 20 pupils per school. "The identification process was fascinating," said Mackintosh. "When you are looking at under-12s, talent ID is much more difficult than in later years, when the skill becomes more apparent. I liken it to an iceberg: the top of the iceberg is the performance that everybody can see but the potential is below the water line and is more difficult to witness, and this is the aspect that is likely to be the most important in determining success. We have endeavoured to take into account all the aspects of these young people in our selection process."

Each school will have a commitment to making football part of the daily curriculum, designed to double the number of sessions for pupils and help them strive for the gold standard of 10,000 hours of practice.

"The timetable will involve a recovery stretching or hydrotherapy session on a Monday, Tuesday to Thursday will focus on technical and tactical improvement, with Friday a day where the coaches and pupils have individual practice," said Mackintosh. "The schools will come together and play Best v Best.

"The support from the clubs is vital and has been excellent throughout. Many SPL and SFL clubs have players attending the schools and that shows the importance of the relationship between the clubs and the Scottish FA. We must work together with the same aim: to develop better players at club and international level." ■

REGIONAL PERFORMANCE SCHOOLS AND COACHES

BRAIDHURST HIGH SCHOOL (MOTHERWELL)
GORDON CRAIG

BROUGHTON HIGH SCHOOL (EDINBURGH)
GREG MILLER

GRAEME HIGH SCHOOL (FALKIRK)
IAN ROSS

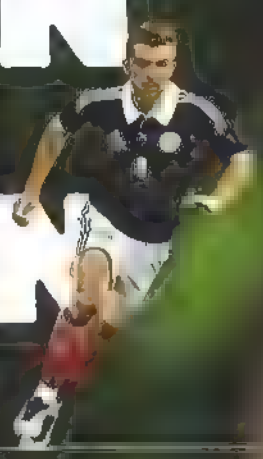
GRANGE ACADEMY (KILMARNOCK)
ANDREW GOLDIE

HAZLEHEAD ACADEMY (ABERDEEN)
IAIN JENKINS

HOLYROOD SECONDARY SCHOOL (GLASGOW)
BRIAN McLAUGHLIN

ST JOHN'S HIGH SCHOOL (DUNDEE)
RAY McKINNON

MORRISON FIRED BY BRAZILIAN DREAM



WEST BROM MIDFIELDER AIMS TO SWAP TOURIST TRIPS FOR WORLD CUP GLORY

>> By Ronnie Esoi

James Morrison enjoyed a dream trip to New York this summer and like most visitors to The Big Apple, he wandered around in some awe taking in the city's famous sights and tourist attractions

Sauntering down Seventh Avenue with girlfriend Kayleigh, the 26-year-old soaked up the searing June sunshine following a long, hard season with West Brom and Scotland

However, although more than 3,000 miles away in a country where it is easy to stay away from the game they call soccer, the midfielder struggled to shrug off the lingering disappointment of missing out on the European Championships in Ukraine and Poland

Morrison firmly established himself in Craig Levein's plans during the Euro qualifiers, playing in every match in the ultimately doomed campaign

Now back in training, and with only memories of Manhattan, he is now looking forward to the 2014 World Cup qualifiers which start in September with the crucial double-header against Serbia and Macedonia at Hampden

"Kayleigh and I crammed in as much as we could when we were in New York," said the Baggies player "We went up the Empire State Building where we had the most fantastic view of Manhattan, visited Central Park, walked over the Brooklyn Bridge and went down the Hudson River on a boat, among lots of other things. It was great, I really enjoyed it and I am glad I did it but most definitely I would have rather have been at the Euros with Scotland

"Being involved in the big games and playing against the top players is what everyone who plays football want to do The qualification campaign was a disappointment, especially seeing Czech Republic get to the play-offs. The penalty they got against us at Hampden to get them a 2-2 draw was a disaster but we shouldn't have got into that position

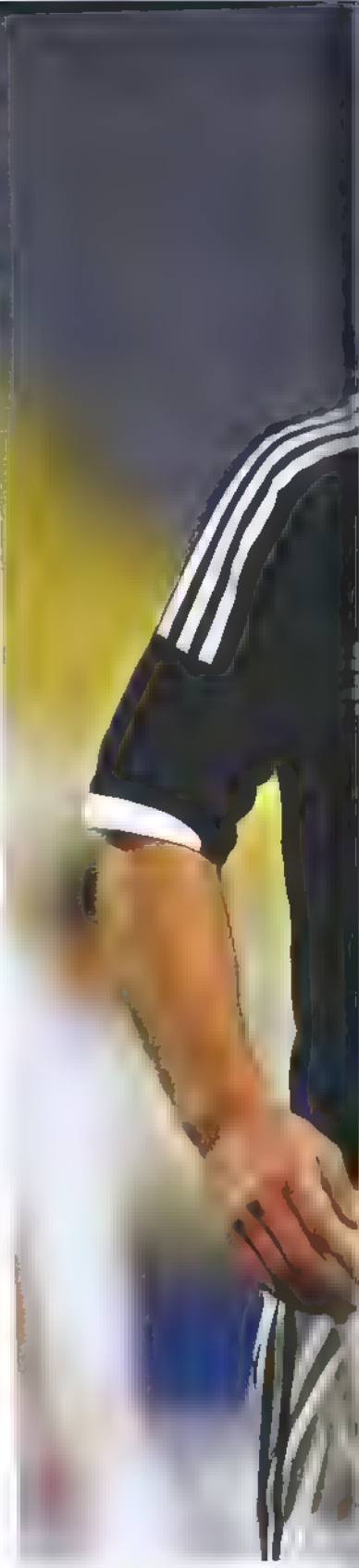
"When I was in New York I snuck off to watch some of the games which were taking place at the Euros, the bars were quite quiet and not many people were interested but I love football that much, I had to see some matches. I watched teams like Spain, Italy, Germany and Croatia, who of course, are one of the teams who are in our group for the World Cup qualifiers.

"We have to learn from the mistakes when we go in to these qualifiers although it's going to be tough, tougher than some people are saying But Brazil, World Cup, 2014, says it all. Brazil put football on the map in many ways. To go there and play in the big stadiums in the finals of a World Cup is an incentive for us all

"As I said, it is a tough group, all of the countries can take points off each other But if we can find consistency we have a chance of getting into the top two. We have got to be confident. There is a great spirit among,the squad, everyone looks forward to meeting up and we are settled in the way we play and we have a lot of players playing in the top two leagues in England now. But there is a lot of hard work ahead of us if we are to make it to Brazil "

English-born Morrison qualified for Scotland through his grandparents and he has steadily grown in importance to the national side since he made his debut in a friendly against the Czech Republic in May, 2008 with Levein one of his biggest admirers

The former Middlesbrough player, who was named International Player of the Year by the Scottish Football Writers Association last season, missed Scotland's 5-1 defeat by the USA in Jacksonville at the end of the season through injury



SCOTLAND v AUSTRALIA

After a stinging defeat, the Scotland boss made a more than favourable comparison between Morrison and Landon Donovan, who had just scored a hat-trick, hit the post and was involved in the USA's two other goals. "I'd take Morrison before Donovan every day of the week, " said Levein

"What the gaffer said has put added pressure on me - thanks, "laughed Morrison. "I think the gaffer was trying to back up his players but it is always nice when a manager believes in you, and when you get that sort of encouragement you gain confidence and you can take that confidence onto the pitch. It's all about confidence and the gaffer gives me that

"The award was a nice way to finish last season off. I have enjoyed my time under Craig Levein and playing for Scotland and if you do that then you tend to do better. I picked up an injury in the last game of the season for West Brom but I am fully fit now and looking forward to the Australia game."

Morrison will come up against one of his former team mates, Australia's legendary goalkeeper Mark Schwarzer, and he is well aware of the Socceroos' pedigree

He said "Australia produce some very good footballers. Tim Cahill is their most famous player I guess but I don't know if he will be playing against us now that he has moved to New York Red Bulls. I played with Mark Schwarzer at Middlesbrough and he has shown he's a top-class player, and a top professional which is shown by the fact that he's still playing at 39. I also played with Mark Viduka when I was a young player at Middlesbrough so, as I say, Australia have always had good players. But I am looking forward to meeting up with guys in the Scotland squad again and it should be a good game." ■

POWER

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The National Lottery®

Robert isn't just a coach to the boys at Croftfoot – among other things he's a taxi driver, mentor, friend and part-time agony aunt.

It might mean she stands in the rain most weeks, but Scott's mum can see that football is helping her son develop confidence and work as part of a team.

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PAST MEETINGS

TONIGHT'S FRIENDLY BETWEEN SCOTLAND AND AUSTRALIA WILL BE THE FIFTH TIME THE TWO COUNTRIES HAVE FACED UP TO EACH OTHER. TWO COMPETITIVE GAMES FOLLOWED BY TWO FRIENDLY MATCHES.

1985

NOVEMBER 20, 1985

SCOTLAND 2 AUSTRALIA 0

HAMPDEN PARK, GLASGOW

Scotland first played Australia 27 years ago in a qualification play-off for the 1986 World Cup finals in Mexico.

The double header - with the first game being played at Hampden - took place with Scottish football still coming to terms with the death of Scotland manager Jock Stein.

A guest of the game, Stein collapsed and died at the end of the final Group 7 qualifier against Wales in Cardiff, where a 1-1 draw was enough to see the visitors take second place.

His assistant, then Aberdeen boss Alex Ferguson, took temporary charge of the national side.

Australia's assistant was a Scot, Eddie Thomson, who had played for Aberdeen and Hearts, and the visitors had Rangers striker David Mitchell in their team.

In the build-up to the game Ferguson, whose Dons side were top of the Premier League, pondered who to pair with Kenny Dalglish who was winning his 99th cap, and at his disposal were Steve Archibald, Graeme Sharp, David Speedie and Frank McAvennie.

"Strikers operate on confidence and it's really encouraging to have so many who are on form now," he said.

Ferguson opted to give McAvennie his first cap and as so often has been the case before and since the Manchester United boss was proved correct, with the West Ham striker scoring the clinching goal in the 2-0 win.

However, it was far from being as easy as many fans and pundits had hoped.

Australia lacked creativity but they were well organised and difficult to break down.

The breakthrough, though, came in the 57th minute when Rangers winger Davie Cooper scored from a free-kick after McAvennie had been fouled as he burst into the box.

Three minutes later, McAvennie scored a dream debut goal when he raced on to a flick from Dalglish to finish in a style that the Evening Times reporter the late Alan Davidson, claimed "would have pleased Denis Law or Gerd Muller."

SCOTLAND

LEIGHTON; NICOL, MALPAS, SOUNESS, McLEISH, MILLER; DALGLISH (SHARP), STRACHAN, McAVENNIE, AITKEN, COOPER.

GOALS

COOPER 57, McAVENNIE 60.

AUSTRALIA

GREEDY; YANKOS, DAVIDSON, RATCLIFFE, O'CONNOR (DUNN), JENNINGS, WATSON (PATIKAS), MURPHY, CRINO, MITCHELL, KOSMINA.

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ROAR OF APPROVAL

FORMER RANGERS MIDFIELDER BOB MALCOM ENTHUSES ABOUT LIFE IN BRISBANE

>> By Scott McDermott

Bob Malcolm wouldn't change the birth of his baby boy Devon for anything in the world. In fact fatherhood, and everything that goes with it, has been embraced by the former Rangers and Motherwell midfielder.

But his son's imminent arrival in 2010 just happened to coincide with his exit from Australian football. His brief 12-month adventure with A-League side Brisbane Roar came to an end as his duty as a dad took precedence.

Now, two years on, Malcolm still wonders what might have been. He admits he'd have loved nothing more than to continue playing Down Under - and possibly finish off his career in Oz.

"The weather, the culture, the lifestyle and the style of football all suited the born and bred Glaswegian.

He was signed by the Roar in 2009 after leaving Fir Park and settled into Frank Farina's squad alongside his ex-Ibrox team-mates Craig Moore and Charlie Miller.

And, despite his premature departure, Malcolm loved the experience and has no regrets about sampling life on the other side of the globe.

As the Socceroos prepare to visit Easter Road for an international challenge match against Scotland, Bob said: "Going to Australia was great for me. Earlier in my career, I would never have thought I'd do anything like that.

"But I'm glad I did because it was totally different. I didn't win any medals during my time over there but I got to see a different culture and lifestyle. I really enjoyed it.

"We'd get up at 6am and have some breakfast then it was an hour's drive to Brisbane for training. We'd have a coffee before starting and we'd be finished for 12 noon.

"So we'd have from around 1pm to 6pm - when it starts getting dark again - to do what we wanted. There's plenty of shopping malls, theme parks and water parks, or you can just go to the beach.

"You can go to the Gold Coast, which is great. It's not like in Scotland, where the rain seems to dictate everything. Here, you often have to go back home to sit and watch TV after training.

"In Glasgow, as soon as the sun comes out guys are out in their shorts and the girls in their mini-skirts. That's just a normal thing in Australia - if you're seen in a pair of jeans they know straight away you're a foreigner.

"It was a brilliant experience. I had played in Scotland and England with Rangers and Derby County. I had won every trophy at Ibrox, so there was no reason for me to stay here. To play in the A-League was a great opportunity and, looking back, I wish I'd spent more time there.

"It was difficult with my wee boy Devon on the way. People say I might have gone to Australia too early but I don't agree with that. Circumstances dictated that I was only there for a year.

"I would have loved at least another year there. If I'd have pushed it, I could have signed for a different club but when Devon was born, my girlfriend would have had to stay in Scotland - meaning I wouldn't see him.

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f she came over to live in Australia t would have meant our parents not ee ng h m grow up

t was a hard situation to deal with - t I decided to come home as soon knew we were having a baby."

la colm was once described by ex-angers boss Alex McLeish as "the est passer of a ball at the club"

When he discovered the Aussies based their footbal philosophy on Dutch coach ng methods, the sitting - df eld player took to it like a duck water

He was hugely mpressed by the tandard of footbal in the A-League, - well as the structure which includes s wage cap and a l mit on foreign nports

Having watched the Scottish game truggle in recent years, Malcolm is adamant we could learn a thing or o from the Austra an set-up

e 31-year-old said: "The appeal me going there was that it was mething new. It was the whole age of the weather, the lifestyle and the fact Cra g Moore had said he footbal wasn't that different to in Scot and

ne standard was very good. Every m in the A-League is around the me standard but they have four or e marquee' stars. How good they usual y determines how well the m do

e rest of the squad comes from oung boys or native Australians lost of them would be good enough o play in Scotland but because ey need to have played in 75% of eir national team's matches, they dn't get a work permit over here

n oyed it because every team in eague wanted to play football on e deck n Australia, they're trying to pt the Dutch philosophy, that kind style

ey like to get it down and play, n most teams p aying 4-3-3. If watch the games, the players techn cally very good But some

FORMER RANGERS TEAM-MATES BOB MALCOLM AND CRAIG MOORE

games are played at 100 degrees and 95% humidity

"You'll get 15 minutes with a high tempo then it slows down, before it picks up again That was the hardest thing for me, trying to cope with the humidity, especially at night when it was difficult to breath at times

"The league system, with the wage cap and limit on foreign players, could definitely be brought in here It's the only way forward for Scottish football, in my opinion

"Even Rangers and Celtic can't attract the big-name stars any more There should be a situation where every club in the SPL must play five or six home-grown players

'Surely that would help the Scotland national team in the long-term? The clubs also stick to their budgets, so they don't get into financial difficulty trying to chase success."

When Holger Osieck's squad take on Craig Levein's men in Edinburgh, there won't be much between the sides. In years gone by, Scotland would always have been regarded as hot favourites against the Aussies

'But things have changed With star players like Mark Schwarzer, Luke Wilkshire and Brett Ho man all excel ng at clubs in Europe, the Socceroos are now a force to be reckoned with in world footbal

And having watched the talent being nurtured in Oz, that doesn't surpr se Malcolm. He said: "Even in my short time there, I noticed a lot of talented youngsters in Australia and I'm not surprised the national team is strong

"In the A-League, you have your five foreigners, but the rest of the team must be made up of Aussies

"Every team has a specific budget with the wage cap That helps keep young players grounded and gives them a terrif c incentive to improve and develop

"The clubs have to produce k ds, who they nurture, before the best ones get moves to countries like Ho land Turkey, the UK or elsewhere

"That's when they start pushing into the national team ' ■

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BARRIER TO BRAZIL

STV SPORT'S ANDY COYLE ANALYSES THE FIVE TEAMS STANDING IN THE WAY OF SCOTLAND'S BID TO REACH THE WORLD CUP FINALS IN 2014.

CROATIA

The only side in Scotland's group to have made this summer's European finals, Croatia may have failed to reach the knockout stages but they showed that they are deserving of their tags as favourites to make a trip to Rio in two years' time.

They may not have progressed in Poland and Ukraine but in their win over Republic of Ireland, draw with Italy and narrow defeat to Spain, they gave a strong showing that will put the rest of qualifying Group A on guard.

There will be something unfamiliar about the Croats when they kick off their campaign though, with Slaven Bilic in the dugout for the first time in six years. The man who plotted qualification for the last two Euros has stepped down and has been replaced by his former international team-mate Igor Stimac.

Stimac has only had limited managerial experience at Hajduk Split, Cibalia and NK Zagreb but the man best known as a formidable defender with Derby County has set his sights high.

"The goal is to qualify for the World Cup and then to try to fight for the title in Brazil," he has said. "I'll play five attackers if that is what we need."

The way not need to. Stimac has inherited a squad from Bilic that is vastly experienced and packed with versatile and classy players.

Nikica Jelavic, already a familiar face to Scottish football fans, added to his burgeoning reputation during the Euros, playing alongside Mario Mandzukic, whose three goals made him tournament joint-top scorer.

In midfield, 79-times capped Niko Kranjcar is vying for a starting place with Dinamo Kiev's Ognjen Vukojevic, Sevilla star Ivan Rakitic and Borussia Dortmund's Ivan Perisic. At the back, Vedran Corluka and Danijo Srna have been over the course of qualification before.

The key man is, of course, Luka Modric. Comfortable on the wing behind the strikers or in central midfield, the two-footed talent makes things happen in the final third for the Vatreni. Coveted by clubs across Europe, Modric is a player capable of changing a game on his own. Surrounded by a capable group he may not need to shoulder the responsibility but if he is on form, Croatia will retain their favourites status. ■

CROATIA DEFENDER JOSIP SIMUNIC WAS SHOWN THREE YELLOW CARDS BY ENGLISH REFEREE GRAHAM POLL BEFORE BEING SENT OFF IN A DRAW AGAINST AUSTRALIA IN THE 2006 WORLD CUP.

CROATIA HAVE MISSED ONLY ONE WORLD CUP AND ONE EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIP FINALS SINCE QUALIFYING FOR EURO 96 AT THE FIRST ATTEMPT.

DAVOR SUKER WAS TOP GOALSCORER IN THE 1998 WORLD CUP AS CROATIA FINISHED THIRD IN THEIR DEBUT APPEARANCE.

CROATIA GAINED DIPLOMATIC RECOGNITION FROM THE EUROPEAN UNION IN 1992 BUT THE WAR OF INDEPENDENCE CONTINUED UNTIL 1995.

PATENT SNODGRASS EAGER TO KICK-START SCOTLAND CAREER

WINGER LOOKS TO MAKE STEP AFTER REACHING PREMIER LEAGUE VIA LIVINGSTON, STIRLING AND LEEDS

>> By Ronnie Esplin

10

Robert Snodgrass's career has been more about incremental steps than a meteoric rise but he got to the promised land in the end

The Glaswegian's determination and self-belief paid off this summer when he landed in the big time with Premier League side Norwich City and with that dream move he hopes to push for a regular place in the Scotland side

The 24-year-old forward joined the Canaries from Leeds United for an undisclosed fee this summer to finally take his place among the great and the good in England's much-vaunted top flight

He started his career at Livingston, making his debut for the West Lothian club as a 17-year-old, and had a loan spell at Stirling Albion before joining the Elland Road side in 2008

Snodgrass played for Scotland at under-19, under-20 and under-21 level but a knee injury prevented him making his full debut under George Burley in Japan in 2009 and it wasn't until two years later that Craig Levein gave him his first cap as a substitute in a 3-0 Carling Nations Cup win over Northern Ireland in Dublin

Last August, Snodgrass scored his first international goal in a 2-1 friendly win over Denmark at Hampden, in what was his first start in dark blue, and while the subsequent 2012 European Championship qualifiers passed him by, he has targeted the 2014 World Cup qualifiers which begin next month

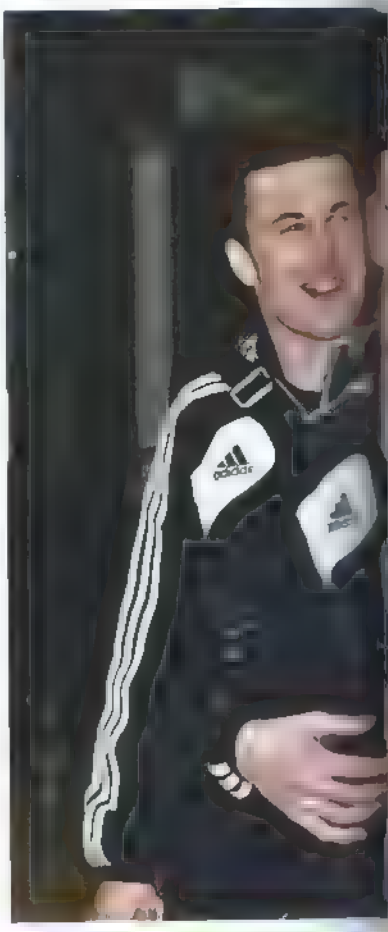
"It's a massive season for me," he said "I have gone from Scottish football, to League One to the Championship and now I am in the Premier League with Norwich who are a fantastic club What they did in the Premier League last season speaks for itself I just hope I can help them get better and hopefully I can play my way back into the Scottish team

"The Premier League is a magnificent league It will be great to test yourself against some of the best players in the world It can only help your game and that is why I made the switch I am hopeful I will be learning and growing as a player in every match "My target is to play as many games as I can for Norwich and at the end of this season, I will see where I stand as a footballer But in the meantime, the World Cup qualifying games are only a month away from starting and hopefully I will be involved. At Livingston you don't think you will get a Scottish cap, you think that is just for lads at the Old Firm clubs and such like. But I still believed in myself that something like that could happen."

Snodgrass fondly recalls his goal against Denmark at Hampden, a header from a Kenny Miller cross which sealed victory for Scotland, and is desperate for more opportunities at international level

That was a great day for me and a good result for Scotland," he said "The full nation is behind you when that first whistle goes and that is a great feeling I would like to have kicked on from there but Craig Levein had his plans and he went down a different route. The manager, Peter Houston and Kenny Black have the best interests of the country at heart and they all want to do well. I need to wait and see how it pans out over the season for me but hopefully I can help my country."

Snodgrass joins a clutch of Scotland players who ply their trade in the Premier League such as James Morrison, Gary Caldwell and Charlie Adam, and can look forward to visiting the great stadiums of English and European football such as Old Trafford, Anfield, Stamford Bridge and The Emirates, but he is glad to have sampled life at the other end of the football spectrum



"THE FULL NATION IS BEHIND YOU WHEN THAT FIRST WHISTLE GOES AND THAT IS A GREAT FEELING."

ROBERTS SNODGRASS WITH TEAM MATES DON COWIE AND GRAHAM DORRANS

rushing off suggestions that trouble buckling down when teenager Snodgrass admits spell with the Binos opened to another side of football, the riches and glamour of er League

think my attitude was a am " he said "I was never a ust think I learned a lot I went south I had a lot elping me at Leeds and strength to strength. I of the manager's plans so I went on loan to hat wasn't a low point at all I saw what real people working nine to five then coming in to training and not getting home until nine or 10 at night. But there was a great team spirit under Allan Moore and I really enjoyed my time there It helped me as a player. When I went back to Livingston I played around 30 games, scored 10 goals and got 15 assists and that's what can happen when you get a run of games "

Scotland's last appearance at the finals of a major tournament, as every member of the Tartan Army knows only too well, was at the 1998 World Cup in France

Snodgrass believes the match against Australia tonight could be the first step towards Brazil and with it, the gratitude of a football-daft nation who are becoming increasingly frustrated at missing out on the big occasions

He said: "The Australia game is another chance for the players to get together and for the gaffer to see some players, and see if he will be able to put them into the World Cup qualifiers. I haven't thought about Brazil, you don't know what's round the corner but I certainly believe that this group of players can get there We know that if we get to a World Cup finals we will be remembered for a long time so we need to push together and get there."

TONY VIDMAR 76 LUKE WILKSHIRE 69 SCOTT CHIPPERFIELD 68 PETER WILSON 64

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PAST MEETINGS

TONIGHT'S FRIENDLY BETWEEN SCOTLAND AND AUSTRALIA WILL BE THE FIFTH TIME THE TWO COUNTRIES HAVE FACED UP TO EACH OTHER. TWO COMPETITIVE GAMES FOLLOWED BY TWO FRIENDLY MATCHES.

1985

Mohammed Al Fayed bought London-based department store Harrods

The miners' strike ended on March 3, nearly a year after it began

56 people died and more than 200 were injured as fire hit Bradford's Valley Parade during a Third Division game in May

Frank McGarvey scores late winner as Celtic beat Dundee United 2-1 in the Scottish Cup final

FRANK McGARVEY CELTIC CUP

DECEMBER 4, 1985

AUSTRALIA 0 SCOTLAND 0

OLYMPIC PARK STADIUM, MELBOURNE

Scotland travelled to Australia for the second leg of their 1986 World Cup finals play-off and a 2-0 lead and favourites to reach Mexico.

A strike [illegible] the game [illegible] and [illegible] the Scots [illegible] sweeter. But [illegible] the match took place in Melbourne with [illegible] off.

Arsenal [illegible] Graham [illegible] Steve [illegible] Steve [illegible] Steve

umbro

MACCA'S DEBUT TRIUMPH

FORMER ST MIRREN, WEST HAM AND CELTIC STRIKER FRANK McAVENNIE RECALLS THE GOAL THAT HELPED SCOTLAND REACH MEXICO '86

>> By Hugh MacDonald

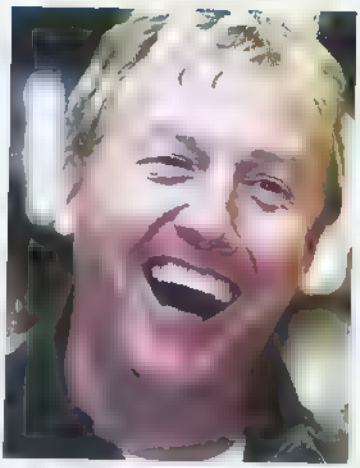
A nod from Dalglish, that is all it took. That is all it normally takes. Big Alex won a ball and headed it on and then Kenny just got a glance. I knew he would. He was strong and he was better in the air than most give him credit for and he was a determined player. I anticipated the touch, got there and I suppose it was a decent goal.

Alex is McLeish. The Kenny was, of course, Dalglish. And the speaker is Frank McAvennie. The day was September 20, 1985, and McAvennie is recalling his debut for the national team with a goal that would help put Scotland and to a World Cup finals in Mexico.

"It was a bad night," says McAvennie in the rasping relish of man who has known and enjoyed evenings of some, ahem, excitement. It is somewhat sobering to reflect that the golden boy is now 52 but he remembers with such detail that one is tempted to prescribe Champagne as a corrective to memory loss.

It is also highly poignant to remember the names, the background and the detail of how Scotland took a significant step towards Mexico. The 2-0 victory in the play-off against Australia was followed by a goalless draw in the away leg and Scotland were at another major finals.

There was much drama in all of this but McAvennie knows there was a stellar cast of characters and a tragic back story. "It was my first cap and there may have been a reason for this," he says with a chuckle. "I had been in a squad under Jock Stein but I had been involved in a bit of carry-on with others who shall remain nameless but could be called Charlie Nicholas," he says. "I don't think Jock was overly impressed and my international career seemed over. But the big man died, God rest him, and Fergie took over.



"I was banging in the goals for West Ham and John Lyall was a great friend of Fergie's. I think they had a chat and I was in."

McAvennie was in remarkable form for the Hammers scoring 26 goals in England's top division. "I went into the match with confidence. If you are scoring goals at your club, you just believe you can do the same for your country. It was awesome at Hampden.

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MONEY BACK

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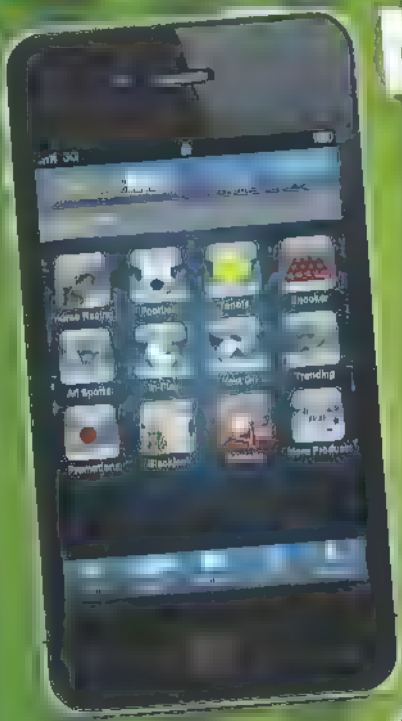

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too. It was a big match, a huge crowd and all my family were there

There was a television dispute and my goals at West Ham were never on telly. It was great for me to have my family watch me score a goal. I was so excited I did not know what to do in celebration."

A Davie Cooper free-kick gave Scotland the lead before McAvennie's goal provided a margin Australia could not redress. But the joy of helping Scotland to the World Cup finals was not embellished for McAvennie by playing in them

"I was part of the squad," says the striker who began and ended his playing career at St Mirren. "But Alex Ferguson never picked me to start. I was desperate for a game and told him that but it was not to be. I think there was a groundswell of press opinion that I should be starting and maybe he reacted a wee bit against that. He was not a man who liked other people picking his team. And, hey, he has done all right on his own."

The sign-off is delivered with the timing of a comedian but the minor tragedy of McAvennie is that people do not remember or fully appreciate that this sharpness was the motif of a career that bristled with goals

"I try not to bother too much about that but I accept that I have a reputation on that has nothing to do with playing. But I will say something I've turned to three clubs - St Mirren, Celtic and West Ham United - so I could not have been that bad an influence or that bad a worker."

He admits that his tally of five caps could have been improved but he insists that there was considerable competition for the striking positions from Dalglish, Nicholas, Paul Sturrock, Graeme Sharpe and David Speedie all edging him out of the team. "Wee Willie (Johnston) was coming through then," he says

After playing in the double-header

"I STILL LOOK BACK AT IT ALL WITH A SMILE. TO SCORE A GOAL THAT TAKES YOUR SIDE TO A WORLD CUP IS AMAZING."

against Australia, McAvennie also turned out against West Germany, Denmark and then, in February 1988, he played his last match for Scotland in Saudi Arabia

"I still look back at it all with a smile," he says. "To score a goal that takes your side to a World Cup is amazing. It is Billy's Boots sort of stuff, it's out of comic. I'm a boy from Milton and I am playing in a Scotland team with Kenny, my hero, and guys like Graeme Souness and Gordon Strachan. And David Cooper - geez his free-kick. These were the legends and I was the young guy who could be the butt of their humour. Great times."

The wistfulness is banished when Macca recalls the details of that night in November 1985. "I used to watch Kenny and I always said that if I played with him I would gamble on him playing me in at any time. So when the ball came to him I anticipated he would get a touch and I made the run. It paid off," he says

The playboy was also a boy who could play. He was always a striker who foraged for goals not just waited for the ball to come to him

"I look at strikers now who seem content just to operate in a small section of the field. I want to shout at them to keep running the channels, to close down defenders. You are part of a team, you must be on the move all the time," he says

There may be an irony in listening to Macca extolling the virtues of the work ethic. But most who watched him and all who played with him would recognise that truth. It may even get a nod from Kenny ■

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BARRIER TO BRAZIL

STV SPORT'S ANDY COYLE ANALYSES THE FIVE TEAMS STANDING IN THE WAY OF SCOTLAND'S BID TO REACH THE WORLD CUP FINALS IN 2014.

FORMER ASTON VILLA STRIKER SAVO MILOSEVIC HOLDS THE RECORD FOR SERBIA CAPS AND GOALS, NETTING 37 TIMES IN 102 APPEARANCES.

SERBIA FIRST PLAYED AS A NATIONAL TEAM IN 1919 BEFORE THE CREATION OF YUGOSLAVIA IN 1921. THEY HAVE PLAYED AS SERBIA ONLY SINCE 2006 FOLLOWING INDEPENDENCE FOR MONTENEGRO.

SERBIA WERE KNOCKED OUT OF THE 2010 WORLD CUP, DESPITE BEATING GERMANY, BECAUSE OF DEFEAT TO AUSTRALIA IN THEIR FINAL GROUP GAME.

SERBIA HAS A POPULATION OF ABOUT 7.3MILLION - ALMOST 3MILLION MORE THAN NEIGHBOURS CROATIA.

SERBIA

Though second seeds, Serbia are a team in transition and Craig Levein may consider them something of an unknown quantity as he looks ahead to the group opener at Hampden on September 8.

After finishing behind Italy and Estonia in Euro 2012 qualifying manager Vladimir Petrovic was fired for failing to build on the success of making World Cup 2010. With the Serbian federation determined to make Brazil 2014, Sinisa Mihajlovic, the former player remembered as an uncompromising defender at Lazio was handed the task of repairing the team.

SINISA MIHAJLOVIC DURING HIS TIME WITH LAZIO

NEMANJA VIDIC

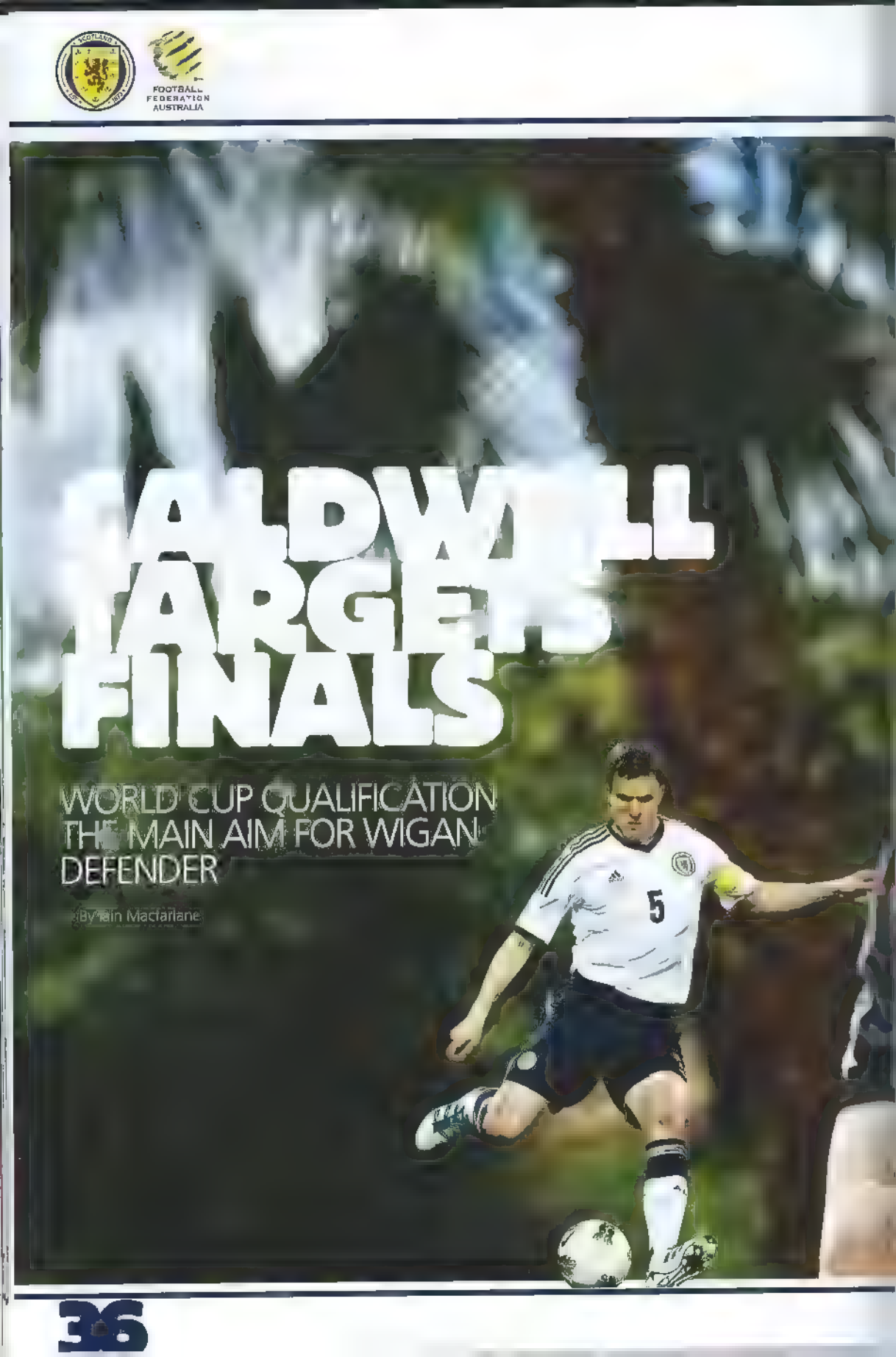
Mihajlovic already had to plan without two of the biggest names in Serbian football. Nemanja Vidic announced his international retirement at the age of 29, deciding he didn't want to add to his 56 caps due to criticism from fans. Dejan Stankovic also asked not to be called up again, the midfield maestro calling time on a 12-year international career that saw him capped 102 times.

The enforced changes would have altered the shape of Mihajlovic's team significantly but he has gone further to transform the look of the White Eagles. Nenad Milijas and Marko Marin haven't played in any of Serbia's matches under Mihajlovic as he seeks to put his own stamp on the team.

CALDWELL TARGETS FINALS

WORLD CUP QUALIFICATION THE MAIN AIM FOR WIGAN DEFENDER

By Iain Macfarlane



Gary Caldwell was never going to be anything other than a proud, Scottish patriot

Growing up with his family in a home sandwiched between Stirling Bridge and the Wallace Monument, the budding footballer had constant reminders of Scotland's glorious past just a few hundred yards either side of his doorstep

But an ancient battle-ground and historical building celebrating this nation's ancient victory over England and the architect of that triumph is not really Caldwell's bag

Right now it's Scotland's future as a football force that is occupying Caldwell's heart and mind

For 10 years, Caldwell has journeyed with Scotland in search of success

For a decade he's had to cope with raised optimism and ultimately crushing disappointment

There have been near misses - such as the Euro 2004 play-offs against Holland and the campaign for the European finals in 2008 which went right to the wire against world champs Italy

But for Caldwell his Scotland career remains a journey of immense pride, but unfulfilled expectation

Yet throughout that time no-one has been more dedicated to the Scotland cause than the former Newcastle, Hibs and Celtic defender

Since winning his first cap in a 5-0 defeat to France in Paris back in March 2002, Caldwell has worked diligently under six Scotland managers

Berti Vogts handed him his debut and Tommy Burns, Walter Smith, Alex McLeish, George Burley and now Craig Levein have all put their faith in the 30-year-old

Tonight against Australia the Wigan Athletic captain is in line to win his 49th cap and edge closer to the Hall of Fame

JOSIP SKOKO 51 MANFRED SCHAEFFER 49 CHARLIE YANKS 49 RAY BAARTZ 48 VINCE GRELLA 47

On a personal note, edging closer to the 50th cap is a huge achievement

But Ca dwell is honest enough to admit that individual honours in team sport ring hollow if they are not accompanied by team success.

Ahead of his return to Easter Road – a ground he loved as a player with Hibs – Ca dwell admitted: "As a kid you want to be a footballer

Then you find a club and want to play first-team games and maybe progress to get international honours.

"To be at the point where I'm close to 50 caps is unbelieveable

I look at the names who have already gathered 50 caps and think of what an honour it would be to reach that level

And then I look at the quality of players who have not made it near 50 caps and it really makes your eyes open

Playing for Scotland has always been a massive thing for me It was the same even at school boy level and does not change now that I'm part of the senior squad

Playing for Scotland is one thing, though. Being successful is another

I know how proud I am pulling on a Scotland shirt at Hampden

Pulling on the navy shirt at a major finals would be incredible and that has to be the aim now

There is a real belief about this squad and management team

This Australia game is our last chance to put things in place for the World Cup campaign, but we don't feel as we're far away from things clicking into place

"The Aussies will be tough opponents but that's what we need as the World Cup group will demand we show really strong character."

As a kid, Ca dwell listened to tales about Kenny Dalglish and regrets the fact that he was too young to remember King Kenny at his peak - Caldwell was only four in 1986 when the Liverpool icon won the last of his record 102 caps

"PLAYING FOR SCOTLAND HAS ALWAYS BEEN A MASSIVE THING FOR ME. EVEN AT SCHOOLBOY LEVEL AND DOES NOT CHANGE NOW THAT I'M PART OF THE SENIOR SQUAD."

Instead, his boyhood hero was Celtic and Scotland star Paul McStay.

The elegant McStay made the game look effortless as he glided around the park dictating play for club and country.

McStay, of course, is a hall of famer and represented Scotland at the 1986 and 1990 World Cups as well as scoring at Euro '92 in a 3-0 win against a post Soviet Union side clumsily named the Confederation of Independent States.

A chance to get to just one finals like his hero would be gratefully snapped up by Caldwell as the countdown begins in earnest for the World Cup 2014 qualifying campaign

He said: "I loved watching McStay – he was such a graceful player and while everyone has Dalglish as their ultimate Scotland hero – myself included - I actually got to see McStay play.

"He was the man I looked up to more than most

"He made the game look simple and had an ability to control matches.

"He also had the fortune to represent Scotland on the world stage and that's still my aim

"Ever since I made my debut in 2002 that's been the goal

"Playing that night against France in the Stade de France in front of 80,000 fans was a shock to the system

"I only had a handful of club games behind me and was thrown in against the likes of David Trezeguet. We were well beaten 5-0

"But you learn from the tough days –and it was particularly satisfying to score the winner for Scotland against France at Hampden four years later

"So far a finals place has eluded us and the next World Cup group is tough – but there's no reason why we can't make it if we all play to our peak.

"We have players at top clubs in England and Scotland – we shouldn't be negative about our chances."

Tonight's friendly clash against the Socceroos is a final chance for Ca dwell and Co to impress boss Levein before the World Cup campaign gets under way next month

Scotland face Serbia, Croatia, Macedonia, Belgium and Wales in a fight to make it to Brazil 2014.

And for Ca dwell the countdown to Rio starts in a familiar Leith venue.

"I've got nothing but good memories about my time at Hibs," he added

"I had two spells at the club – the first was a six-month loan spell and then signed a two and a half year deal

"I always enjoyed playing at Easter Road, but haven't been back at the ground since the old enclosure was knocked down to make way for a new stand

"It was always a noisy part of the ground anyway, but with more fans in there now it can only add to the atmosphere

"We let ourselves down with the last outing in Florida against the USA. No-one saw that coming

"We now have to show that was a blip by doing well against Australia and then making sure we get off to a flyer in the World Cup group." ■

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PAST MEETINGS

TONIGHT'S FRIENDLY BETWEEN SCOTLAND AND AUSTRALIA WILL BE THE FIFTH TIME THE TWO COUNTRIES HAVE FACED UP TO EACH OTHER, TWO COMPETITIVE GAMES FOLLOWED BY TWO FRIENDLY MATCHES.

1996

The Spice Girls' debut single Wannabe, topped the chart for seven weeks and sold 2million copies

Celtic ended the 1995-96 season on a 31-game unbeaten run but finished four points behind champions Rangers

Rangers midfielder Paul Gascoigne won both player of the year awards ahead of his impressive Euro 96 campaign

Livingston won the Third Division title in the club's first season in West Lothian after changing their name from Meadowbank Thistle

MARCH 27, 1996

SCOTLAND 1, AUSTRALIA 0

HAMPDEN PARK, GLASGOW

Craig Brown's Scotland were looking forward to the European Championship in England in the summer of 1996 when Australia visited Glasgow for a March friendly.

Those were friendly days in the international game.

The Scotland manager 21 players including Christian Dailly, Simon Lynch, Gordon Hamilton - and Duncan Shearer for the semi-final of the European Championship at Wembley with a 3-1 win over England's Gazza, Alan Shearer and Tony Adams.

The game ended 1-0 win over Australia, the goal scored by Ally McCoist.

The pro-Rangers crowd was made complete for the game by the return of Ally McCoist, who scored the winning goal in his 50th appearance for Scotland.

Kevin Gallacher's dismissal after 28 minutes of the international exploded second half and ejected some angrily into a game that had been largely

In the 55th minute after battling to win possession on the left-hand side Gallacher whipped a cross and McCoist moved in to finally beat his tackle and burly shadow Horvat to header past Mark Bosnich.

After the match Brown remarked McCoist's goal of a type only say and "My assistant Alex McLeish and Archie know him better than any matters."

McCoist, topping a run in the team Brown's Euro squad, which he did was as bubbly as ever.

He said "It's not every night you get to captain your country, earn your 50th cap and score the only goal of the game. If it had been me I really couldn't have scripted it any better. Well I suppose I could have but no one would have believed me."

Australia were ranked 23 places behind Scotland at 31st. Brown was under pressure from Celtic's Brian O'Neil's first cap, defended in spite of the opposition but however, his assessment of the win was "satisfactory" and "We were moderately satisfied."

SCOTLAND

LEIGHTON, BURLEY, BOYD, O'NEIL (BOOTH), HENDRY, McKINLAY (JACKSON), SPENCER, McSTAY (GALLACHER), McCOIST (NEVIN 80), McALLISTER, COLLINS.

GOALS

McCOIST 55

AUSTRALIA

BOSNICH, HORVAT, T VIDMAR, POPOVIC, TOBIN, CORICA, SLATER, VAN BLERK, A VIDMAR, ARNOLD, VEART (TIATTO).

STERJOVSKI 44 AURELIO VIDMAR 44 ADRIAN ALSTON 43 DAVID CARNEY 43 MARK VIDUKA 43

AUSTRALIA'S NATIONAL GAIN

FORMER SCOTLAND MANAGER CRAIG BROWN SALUTES AUSTRALIA'S COMMITMENT TO SPORTING SUCCESS

>> By Craig [illegible]n

Australia arrive in Scotland as one of the top-ranked nations in the world game. Such a scenario would have been unthinkable to many supporters of the game around two decades ago, but not former Scotland head coach Craig Brown

The Aberdeen boss was there at the embryonic stages of the Australian footballing rise having been part of the decision-making group at the Scottish FA who invited the emerging team from Down Under to Hampden Park on two occasions in the recent past in 1996 and 2000

Even then, standards had risen dramatically from the quality of team which Scotland had encountered in the two-legged play-off for World Cup Finals in Mexico in 1986

On the first Australian visit to Glasgow since losing a decade previously, Brown's team were able to secure a narrow 1-0 victory courtesy of a goal from Ally McCoist

However, with more and more players beginning to ply their trade in the top leagues of Europe, the Aussies returned four years later to win 2-0.

This was an evolving process which few other than Brown had foreseen and he explained, "The government of Australia prioritise sport and that's a well-known fact.

"I'm told that at one stage, from the lottery cash which is raised here, there is around three times as much funding provided to the arts as there is to sport

"Australia do not do it that way Sport comes first

"It's a two-way thing. Not only does having successful sportsmen, sportswomen and sporting teams give the country prest ge, it also he ps the health of the nation

"The entire nation has benefited from the commitment and they always look to make sure the main sports do wel

"All of the Institutes of Sport n Australia made footbal one of their priorities when they started and there was little doubt that the country was going to get stronger and develop within the game

"Money and time is devoted into their sports and it is no surprise that they excel in so many, with footbal now among those."

Brown's first taste of action against the Socceroos came in March 1996

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Mars

WORK REST PLAY
Mars
FOOTBALL

when they were chosen as opponents during the crucial warm-up period ahead of the European Championship finals in England

Rangers striker McCoist, who captained the side on the night, netted the only goal of the contest [illegible] minutes into the second-half to provide a morale-boosting triumph

But, at the time, mass hysteria did not follow a single-goal win over the Aussies and Brown said "Australia were not rated by many people at that time, but they were improving and I felt the provided an excellent test due to their organisation and their workrate

"We managed to win with a goal from Alistair and I was pleased with that"

However, standards were improving in the Southern Hemisphere and, when the Socceroos returned to Glasgow four years later, Brown was not so satisfied

With more European-based players in their squad, the Aussies were too strong for their hosts and goals from Brett Emerton, of Feyenoord, and David Zdrilic settled the issue

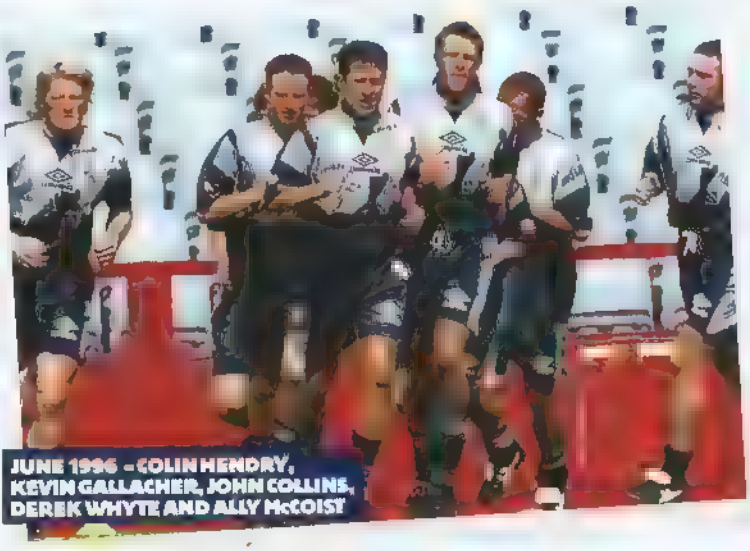
Howls of derison were heard from the public and the media after the result [illegible] Brown recalled: "From memory, in the second match in 2000, we did have a slightly weaker team from our normal first-choice squad

It was an experimental side, which was something which I didn't usually do

"But, even so, you could see the improvement in the Australian team and there were a lot more names which people recognised in Scotland."

Sadly for Brown and his countrymen, the subsequent fortunes of the respective countries have been in sharp contrast

Scotland have never reached a major finals since that last friendly at Hampden, but it's been a different story for the Aussies as they have spared up the globe's pecking order



JUNE 1996 – COLIN HENDRY, KEVIN GALLACHER, JOHN COLLINS, DEREK WHYTE AND ALLY McCOIST

With players such as Harry Kewell and Mark Viduka emerging, the Socceroos narrowly failed to make the Japan and South Korea World Cup Finals in 2002 after losing a play-off to Uruguay

However, on the rise and up to 49th in the world, the Aussies went one better four years later in their next World Cup play-off having again landed a tie against the South Americans

After both legs of the two-legged encounter ended 1-0 for the home team, Australia became the only team to ever qualify for a World Cup Finals by a penalty shootout after goalkeeper Mark Schwarzer made two saves to book a Germany 2006 place for his country

Not content with a first qualification for 32 years, Guus Hiddink's team made it out of the group stages before falling in controversial fashion to Italy in the last 16

The Aussies were straight back for the 2010 event in South Africa with the Scots watching on TV and their stock continues to rise

Now ranked 23rd on the planet, 26 places above their hosts tonight, Brown has seen his prophecy about Australian football come true

He said: "No-one should be shocked because, as I've said, Australia have always been an athletic and well-organised team, they have the backing from their government and now they possess more players than ever playing in Europe and South America

"In addition to that, their domestic A-League is going from strength to strength having taken off impressively

"They are taking advice from other outlets and, for example, one of my former players with Scotland is manager at Perth Glory, that is Ian Ferguson

"Ian's team reached the A-League Grand Final last season and there is input from various other countries, which cannot be doing any harm

"Australia tends to excel in just about every sport and, although it was perhaps not popular against the likes of cricket and rugby in years gone by, it was always going to grow when the public got behind it and the kids started to play

"Now all of that is coming together and I'd expect the team to face Scotland this time around to keep showing the improvements made from 1996 and 2000" ■

JOHNNY WARREN 42 PAUL TRIMBOLI 40 OSCAR CRINO 39 FRANK FARINA 37 JEFF OLVER 37

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BARRIER TO BRAZIL

STV SPORT'S ANDY COYLE ANALYSES THE FIVE TEAMS STANDING IN THE WAY OF SCOTLAND'S BID TO REACH THE WORLD CUP FINALS IN 2014.

BELGIUM HAVE APPEARED IN 11 WORLD CUPS WITH THEIR BEST PERFORMANCE A FOURTH-PLACE FINISH IN 1986 FOLLOWING SEMI-FINAL DEFEAT BY A DIEGO MARADONA-INSPIRED ARGENTINA.

CHELSEA FORWARD ROMELU LUKAKU MADE HIS FULL INTERNATIONAL DEBUT AGED 16.

BELGIUM QUALIFIED FOR THEIR SIXTH CONSECUTIVE WORLD CUP IN 2002 BUT HAVE NOT BEEN TO A MAJOR FINALS SINCE.

A BELGIAN HAS WON THE TOUR DE FRANCE 18 TIMES, MORE THAN ANY OTHER COUNTRY OTHER THAN THE HOSTS.

BELGIUM

After a spell in the international doldrums, Belgium are a side on the up and are looking to reach their first international finals since the World Cup in South Korea and Japan a decade ago.

The Red Devils fell short when aiming to land a play-off place for Euro 2012, finishing behind Germany and Turkey in qualifying Group A but showed the danger they can pose with 21 goals in the 10 games.

MARC WILMOT

Former international midfielder Marc Wilmots is at the helm, having succeeded Georges Leekens earlier this year, and he is tasked with getting the best from a group of emerging talent who are already showing what they can achieve in club football.

A strong core consisting of English Premier League stars Vincent Kompany, Thomas Vermaelen, Marouane Fellaini and Moussa Dembele have gained international experience together and are all in their mid-20s but the hopes of the Belgian fans could rest on the contribution made by the younger players.

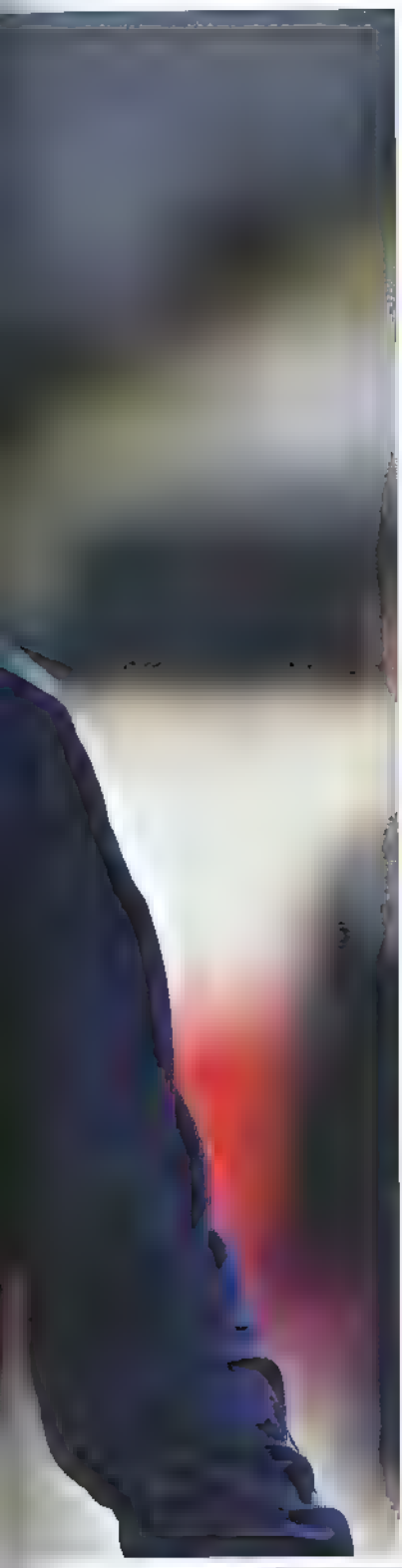
The 22-year-old twenty-strike Nacer Chadli already has Champions League experience and has two goals in seven internationals, while 19-year-old Romelu Lukaku was a star at Anderlecht before Chelsea beat a host of clubs to his signature last year.

The jewel in the crown, however, is Eden Hazard. The attacking lynchpin of a Lille side that did the double in 2011, Hazard won the Ligue 1 young player of the year award in 2009 and 2010 before picking up the senior player's award in the next two seasons.

Lille couldn't hold on to him any longer and Chelsea paid a reported £32m to take him to Stamford Bridge this summer. Seventeen goals and 16 assists last season is proof of his mesmerising talent and Craig Levein will need to devise a plan to keep his impact to a minimum.

EDEN HAZARD

DW
Everton
Chang



18 YRS

DAVID WEIR RECALLS SOME STRANGE TACTICS FROM KEVIN MUSCAT IN THE PREVIOUS MEETING BETWEEN SCOTLAND AND AUSTRALIA.

By Douglas Alexander

Australia don't do friendlies. David Weir discovered this in November 2000 when he was on the receiving end of a 2-0 defeat to them at Hampden.

"They are a very patriotic country and a physically strong side," says the former Scotland and Rangers captain, who is now coaching and scouting at Everton. "They will let you know you are in a game all right. Competitive games are always different but Australia will make sure Scotland get a high-tempo workout at Easter Road. It will probably be as good preparation as Craig Levein could hope for with the qualifiers to come."

Australia raced into an early lead that night as Brett Emerton's slick finish saw him score his first goal for his country, and then extended the lead in the second half via a David Zdrilic goal.

Weir was impressed by both goalscorers but chiefly recalls the game for the antics of Kevin Muscat, the former Rangers right-back, who had an uncanny ability to mimic the referee's whistle and used this ploy throughout the game to the growing irritation of Scotland's players. Then an Everton player, Weir also shared a car back to the north-west of

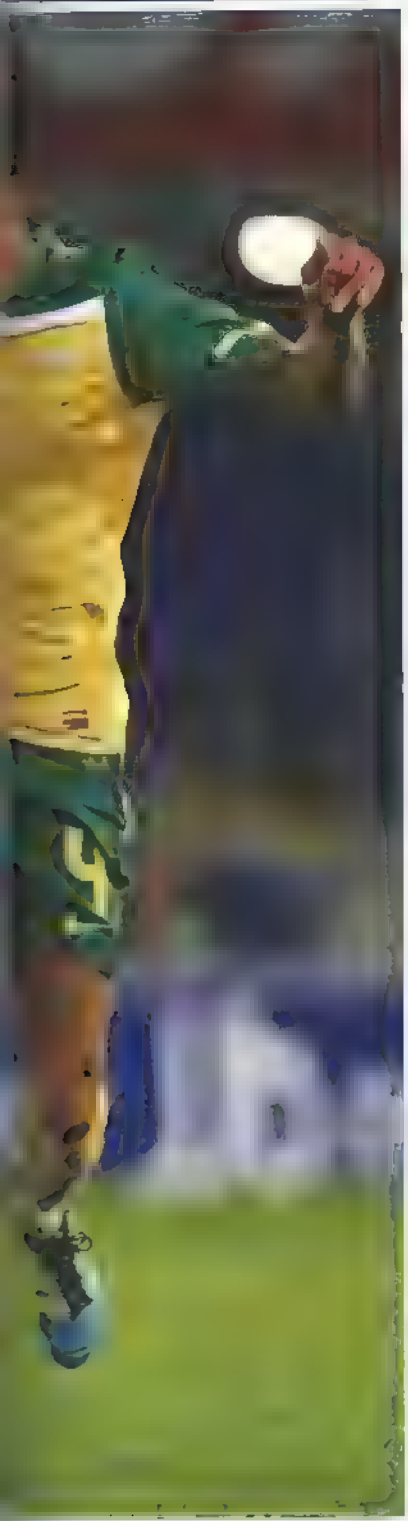
England with Danny T atto, the former Manchester C ty m df elder, afterwards That was a short journey by Austral an standards

"You can see how much p aying for their country means by the distances they travel to p ay for it, they w th nk noth ng of f y ng across the world to turn out for qua f ers added Weir

saw that in Tim C ahil who has just jo ned the New York Red Bul s but was a b g part of our success at Everton. He brought goals, energy and a w nner's mentality to our team when David Moyes signed him from M lwa l for £1 5m l ion in 2004, the same summer we so d Wayne Rooney to Manchester United

"Plenty of clubs had ooked at Tim, but the manager was he one prepared to gamble on h s potent al and he deserves credit for that as it turned out to be an inspired sign ng T m fitted perfectly nto our team, he had a hunger to succeed and a bravery wh ch often saw him score

DANNY TIATTO



important goals for us in big games He was also phenomenal in the air for a player of his height and he always wanted to play for his country

"Tim is Samoan on his mother's side and I do think the Australians benefit from the mix of cultures and hence genes in their country They are a great athletes They are brought up in a country where sport is an important part of the culture, with the Australian Institute of Sport and so on, and they also have a great climate to get outdoors and play it They also genuinely seem to enjoy a contest, rather than feel the pressure of it

"We found that at Hampden in 2000 They were physical and scored an early goal through (Brett) Emerton, who was a quality player then with Feyenoord before moving to the English Premier League for eight good years at Blackburn.

"David Zdrilic also impressed me. He joined Aberdeen later but I think that was toward the end of his career Muscat's whistling was annoying, I didn't really take to him, but Danny Tatto was good company on the way back down to England afterwards - despite the result "

As a schoolboy, Weir also recalls watching Scotland's World Cup play-off with the Australians back in 1985 Sir Alex Ferguson's side successfully protected a 2-0 lead from the first leg in the second game in Melbourne as Scotland stopped for a day to make sure they completed the qualification job after Jock Stein's death

"I remember watching those games and I guess at the time Scotland were expected to win, despite being a much smaller nation in terms of population," Weir said "Now that dynamic has changed a bit. Australia have been at the last two World Cups while we haven't "

Weir believes his former Scotland teammates have to take remedying that failure in the forthcoming qualifying campaign a step at a time

"I don't think we should look too far ahead of ourselves It would be better to take each double header as it comes and try to win one of the two games in each of them If we do that, then we won't be far away at the end

"It's a tough group Belgium and Wales look to be young, improving sides and you would always expect tough games from the likes of Croatia and Serbia but those teams will take points off each other too Croatia against Serbia will be like a derby within the group and so for that matter will our own games with Wales

"The group we are in is not dissimilar to the one we had for the 2002 World Cup Belgium and Croatia were also in that one but there were none of what could be described as the 'big' nations, the ones that are all expected to qualify for every tournament like Germany, Italy or Spain

"We didn't win our home matches against the Belgians or the Croatians back then and paid the price for it by the end of the group The Belgium game was the one which really hurt us We were 2-0 up in that game and they were down to 10 men but we missed a chance to go 3-0 up and then they came back at us and equalised right at the end

"Darren Fletcher will be a real loss for us while he fights his illness Not only is he an excellent player but he is also a natural leader within the group, who the other players look to

"It will be important that we field our strongest team in as many games as possible and I also think you need a regular goal scorer to have a good campaign Kenny Miller has done that for Scotland in the past and can again but we may need others like Steven Naismith, David Goodwillie, Jordan Rhodes to contribute when Kenny isn't scoring or available "

HERE WE GO...AGAIN

VETERAN TARTAN ARMY RECRUIT JIM TODD GETS READY FOR ANOTHER QUALIFICATION CAMPAIGN

Following Scotland got into my blood in the 1970s when I went to the qualifiers for the 1978 World Cup finals in Argentina, which I attended. That was my first tournament, it was an excellent trip and I have kept following Scotland since. I have only missed six games home or away in all that time.

I was in Spain 82, Mexico 86, Italy 90, Sweden 92, England 96 and France 98. I have even been to Japan for friendlies and six of us are not long back from America for the friendly match against the USA.

People know me for my travel partner Hamish and are always asking after him. Hamish is my tartan mascot, he is about two foot high and was made for me by a girl about 30 years ago. I sometimes take him in my holdall, other times he has to go in the hold. When I was in Russia, he was taken off me at the airport by the security people, X-rayed and then cut open. They thought there was something inside but there obviously wasn't and they roughly sewed him back up. Actually, I have two Hamish mascots now, one to go with my Royal Stewart suit and one to go with my dress Stewart suit.

Hamish will be coming with me to the 2014 World Cup qualifiers and we have them sussed already. For the first two away games we are getting the train from Glasgow to Wales, staying a couple of nights in Wales then getting the train to London and then the Eurostar to Brussels. You always want to get home at the end of any trip so we are flying from Brussels to Dublin and then to Prestwick and no doubt there will be thousands like us.

Of all the tournaments I've been to, Argentina is my favourite. The people there could not have been friendlier, they really couldn't do enough for you. I think there were 14 of us who flew from Glasgow to Buenos Aries. There weren't many supporters who travelled from Scotland, the trip cost around £2,000 which was a lot of money then. There were around 500 or so Scottish fans at the games, most of them lived over there or had travelled down from USA or places closer to Argentina.

Mexico City was where I saw my most memorable sight. There had been an earthquake a couple of months before the World Cup finals began and they had closed off the roads to stop the fans seeing the devastation. But we nipped over one of the barriers, walked round the block and saw buildings with big cracks in them, glass strewn all over the place and a huge crack in the ground, too big to jump across, which they had tried to fill in with rubble. That was really scary. Then the 14 of us went to Acapulco for a couple of days and were in this pub when we saw the lights rattling and the lights dimming but the barman told us not to worry, it was only a tremor. But the 14 of us were worried, I can assure you.

I can't count the number of Scotland games I have been to over the years, there have been too many, but the one I enjoyed most was the 2-1 win over England at Wembley in 1977 when we 'borrowed' the turf and goal posts. I brought some turf back and planted it in my back green.

We live in hope of qualifying for Brazil 2014, it's been too long since we have been to the finals of a major tournament but the way I look at travelling with the Tartan Army, you get to see the football but you also see parts of the world like Macedonia, Moldova and Japan that you haven't been to before and you would never see otherwise.

I will be 60 in November and I'm having a big party where there will be around 90 Tartan Army members present, all dressed up in their kits. There's a women from Glasgow called Moira, who goes to the games, and she is coming along. She must be in her late 70s and we saw her in America. She had made her own way over there. If I can follow Scotland as long as her then I reckon I will have seen most of the world. ■

MALKY McDONALD BOBBY BROWN TOMMY DOCHERTY WILLIE ORMOND ALLY MACLEOD JOCK ST

PAST MEETINGS

TONIGHT'S FRIENDLY BETWEEN SCOTLAND AND AUSTRALIA WILL BE THE FIFTH TIME THE TWO COUNTRIES HAVE FACED UP TO EACH OTHER, TWO COMPETITIVE GAMES FOLLOWED BY TWO FRIENDLY MATCHES

2000

Vladimir Putin was elected Russian president

Hamilton finished bottom of the Second Division after being deducted 15 points for failing to fulfil a fixture against Stenhousemuir

Aberdeen lost two Hampden finals, 2-0 against Celtic in the League Cup and 4-0 against Rangers in the Scottish Cup

Barry Ferguson was named player of the year after Rangers won the SPL by 21 points from Celtic

BARRY FERGUSON

NOVEMBER 15, 2000

SCOTLAND 0 AUSTRALIA 2

HAMPDEN PARK, GLASGOW

Scotland suffered their only defeat to Australia to date in the last meeting at Hampden in 2000.

The visitors were without Rangers duo Tony Vidmar and Craig Moore, Harry Kewell and former Celtic striker Mark Viduka, who retained a stake in the tests.

Despite the absence of those recognised first choice players, goals from Bret Emerton and David Zdrilic gave the visitors a deserved win which did not go down too well with the Tartan Army of the Scottish media.

The Herald's Ken Gallacher claimed that the shock defeat damaged the feel-good factor which pointed enquiringly at Australia's sporting ethos and how players had been developed through the Australian National Academy and academies set up throughout the country.

Before the game, Scotland manager Craig Brown noted that one of the factors that "there was only one player who plays in Australia but nobody is taking Australia's improvement as a football nation for granted" was a disappointing performance by the home side.

The Aussies took control early in the game, and there was little surprise when Emerton headed them into the lead after 12 minutes, following a flattering break. He took a Paul Okon pass and drove powerfully into the box, where he held off Colin Cameron and Darren Young before shooting past Jonathan Gould.

Scotland, with Dominic Matteo making his debut, were set on the hook when Zdrilic headed a letter from six yards after being set up by Stan Lazaridis.

CRAIG BROWN

However, in the 66th minute Kevin Muscat, who would go on to have a spell at Rangers, picked the ball up wide on the right and when he swung a cross into the box, Zdrilic got between Colin Hendry and Tom Boyd to send his free header past Gould.

Brown then gained a "look at the performance" claiming that one of the worst displays in the seven years he had been in charge. He said: "We did not work as a team, we did not build up attacks and we lacked penetration up front."

SCOTLAND

GOULD, WEIR (ELLIOTT), BOYD, DAILLY, O'NEIL (HENDRY), FERGUSON, DODDS, BURLEY (DICKOV), CAMERON (McCANN), HUTCHISON, MATTEO.

AUSTRALIA

SCHWARZER, POPOVIC, MURPHY, MUSCAT, LAZARIDIS, EMERTON, SKOKO (WEHRMAN), OKON, TIATTO (BURNS), AGOSTINO (STERJOVSKI), ZDRILIC (ZANE).

GOALS

EMERTON 12, ZDRILIC 66

ALEX FERGUSON ANDY ROXBURGH CRAIG BROWN BERTI VOGTS TOMMY BURNS WALTER SMITH

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WILL
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STV SPORT'S ANDY COYLE ANALYSES THE FIVE TEAMS STANDING IN THE WAY OF SCOTLAND'S BID TO REACH THE WORLD CUP FINALS IN 2014.

MACEDONIA

Ranked 103rd in the world, and not boasting any household names, Macedonia would be considered unlikely qualifiers from Scotland's group but could prove a tricky proposition.

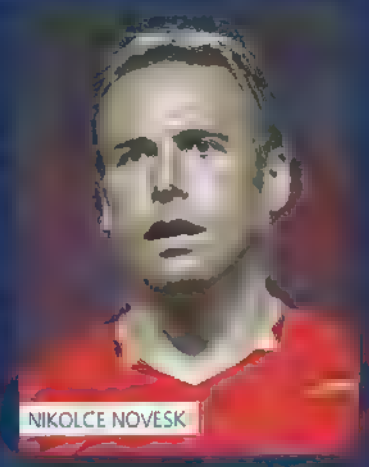
Despite the recent departure of manager John Toshack, the likely aim is an improvement on the fifth place finish in their Euro 2012 qualification group.

That campaign brought only two wins, both against Andorra. Draws against Slovakia and Armenia, and losses by only a single goal to Russia at home and Republic of Ireland away suggest that Macedonia will be capable of frustrating the bigger names in the group.

Goalless draws against Portugal and Angola point to a Macedonian team that is 'hard to beat' and given the side's difficulty in scoring goals in recent years, a mean defence will be a necessity.

Nikolce Noveski of Mainz will be the mainstay in that back line and the 33-year old is one of few Macedonians to play in one of Europe's major leagues. Another, Dinamo Kiev's Goran Popov at left back, will look to supplement his defensive duties with attack while Bari's Stefan Ristovski will provide balance on the opposite flank.

Midfield is a problem position for Macedonia with four of the five selected for their most recent squad lacking any real international experience. The exception is former Ipswich and Preston player Velice Sumulikovski capped 79 times, but the Tianjin Teda man is reaching the end of his career.


NIKOLCE NOVESK

Only one of the most recent squad has scored more than three international goals but the man who has is the team's undoubted star. Goran Pandev, with 24 goals in 64 caps, is the focal point of the side. The Napoli striker has been a consistent goal threat for a decade and if Macedonia are to upset the odds he will be the man most likely to impress.

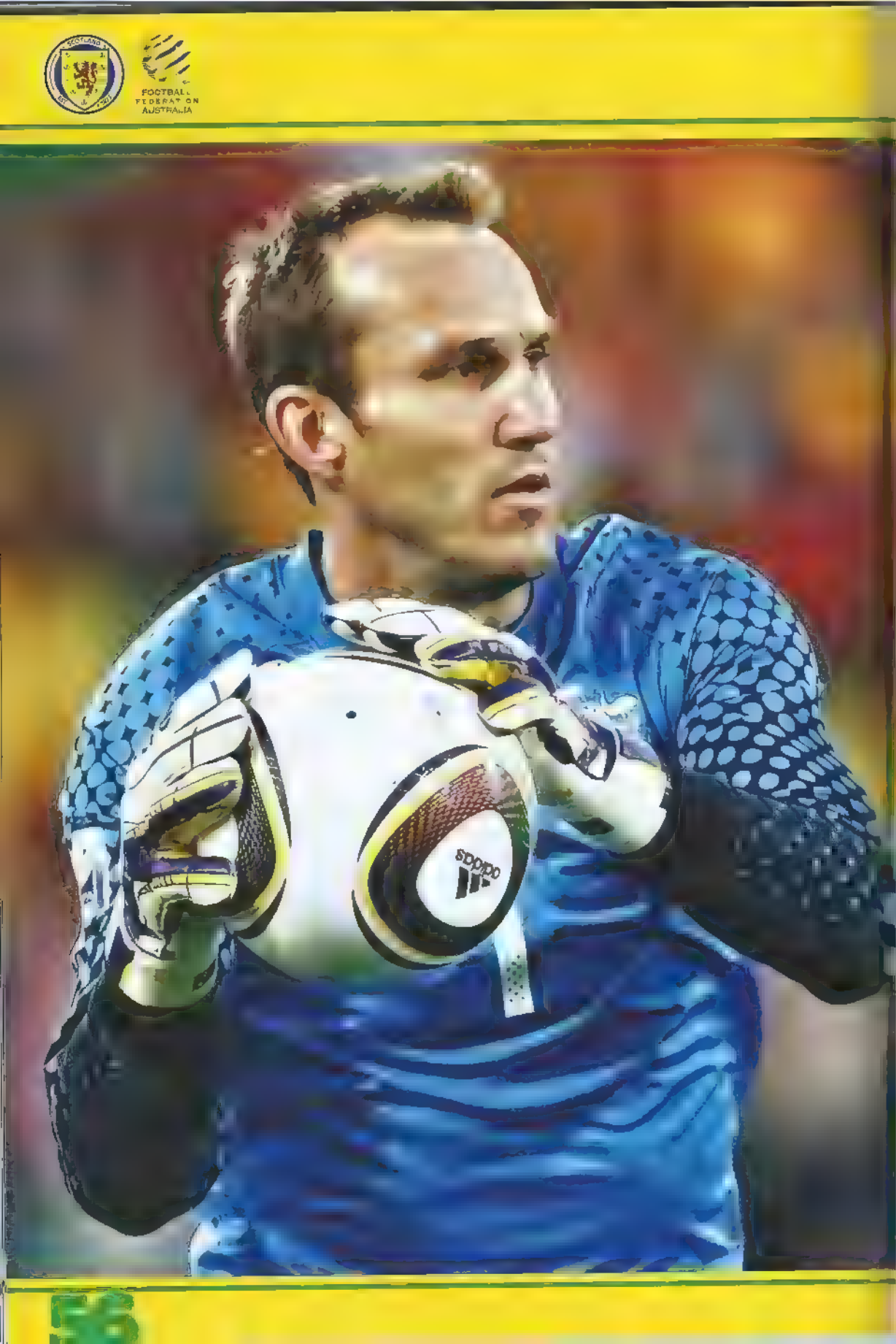
GORAN PANDEV

MACEDONIA LED SPAIN BY TWO GORAN PANDEV GOALS IN A 2009 FRIENDLY BEFORE THE EUROPEAN CHAMPIONS WON 3-2.

MACEDONIA OPEN THEIR CAMPAIGN AGAINST CROATIA ON SEPTEMBER 7.

ARTIM SAKIRI BEAT DAVID SEAMAN DIRECT FROM A CORNER DURING A 2-2 EURO 2004 QUALIFYING DRAW IN SOUTHAMPTON.

THE USE OF THE "FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC" PREFIX IS A RESULT OF A DISPUTE WITH GREECE OVER THE RIGHTS TO THE NAME "MACEDONIA".


FOOTBALL
FEDERATION
AUSTRALIA

PITTODRIE PELE SURPRISE INSPIRES SCHWARZER

A MEETING WITH [illegible] TIME GREAT IN
[illegible]RDEEN [illegible] TEENAGE
[illegible]ALKE[illegible]
INTERNA[illegible]

Scottish football fans do not have a monopoly on fond memories of the under 16 World Championships which were held in this country in 1989, and where the young Scots lost to an allegedly not so-young Saudi Arabian side in the Hampden final

Australia's legendary keeper Mark Schwarzer takes the penultimate step towards his 100th cap at Easter Road tonight and he recalls that the youth tournament - with help from Brazilian legend Pele - provided an inspiration to him as a budding professional that was all but missing back home in Sydney

"When I was growing up soccer was always perceived to be a game you played if you were not tough enough to play rugby or Australian rules football," said the 39-year-old Fulham keeper

Schwarzer subsequently proved to be made of stern stuff but he remembers his first trip to Scotland when schoolboy dreams crystalised into adult ambitions

"The Australian team stayed in Aberdeen and we played at Pittodrie," he said

"Scotland got to the final that year against Saudi Arabia but we didn't get out of the group stages

"We lost to Brazil and East Germany and drew with the USA so it wasn't a successful competition for us

"But it was an amazing experience for a young footballer, travelling to Europe to play football in a European city where football is everything. It was hugely significant to my career

"We also met Pele and that gave me the added inspiration to become a professional footballer. Our manager Vic Daglish, a Scotsman, didn't let us know we were going to meet him. He took us to Pittodrie to get a walk on the pitch and have a look around and then we got a shout, turned around and then Pele strolled over. I will never forget it. He had an amazing aura about him and all the boys were thrilled."

It wasn't easy for the young Schwarzer to stand up to stereotypical Australian machismo when it came to choosing his favourite sport

"Every now and then some people would make fun of you but you had to deal with that and the test was to do well and try to prove the doubters wrong," he said. "It was a long time ago, people were naive and the game has changed so much. The Australian public now understand the game now it is now a world game played on a world-wide scale. I think there is room for Australian rules football, Rugby League and Rugby Union but football is truly a world game."

There was certainly less understanding of the game among Schwarzer's fellow countrymen when Scotland visited Australia for the second leg of their World Cup play-off in 1985. A hard-fought goalless draw following a 2-0 win at Hampden put the Scots into the Mexico finals the following summer, as expected. "I do vaguely remember the play-offs as a kid and crossing everything that Australia would get through but it wasn't to be," he said

"But I can say with 100% certainty that it is completely different now. There has been a huge turnaround in attitudes towards the national team. When we qualified for the World Cup in 2006, the game did a U-turn and we were catapulted into the public eye. Now there is a sense of expectation from the Australian public."

Schwarzer's safe hands have underpinned Australia's development as a football nation. He made his international debut against Canada

in Edmonton in a 1994 World Cup qualifier and is now the Socceroos most-capped player. He was between the sticks in the last friendly against Scotland, at Hampden in 2000, when the visitors swept Craig Brown's team away thanks to goals from Brett Emerton and David Zdrilic.

The former Middlesbrough keeper remembers that victory well and warned the Scots that Australia have improved further in the intervening 12 years.

"It was a very good win for us that night," he said. "I don't think Scotland, or anyone else for that matter, expected it.

"We have hugely improved as a football nation over the last decade. We had some fantastic players in 2000 but we are even better than we were back then. We are always confident no matter who we play against and teams often underestimate us or take friendlies too lightly. We are difficult opponents to play against and over time that has shown to be the case. We qualified for consecutive World Cups in 2006 and 2010 and now we are looking to qualify for the third in 2014 and we are confident of doing that."

Schwarzer, like most goalkeepers, is not without a quirky side. He will take to the field tonight with the same shin pads he wore in his debut for Australian club Marconi Stallions over 20 years ago.

"I got them when I was 19 so I've had them for 20 years," he said.

"It is just one of those things, I didn't set out to keep them that long, it just happened. I was asked five or six years ago if I had any superstitions and I didn't think I had any but I suppose you could say that is one although I have played without them before and it hasn't been a crisis. They are still in decent condition and my son has 'bagged' them – he wants to be a professional footballer. You bring your own equipment for international games but the kit man at the club knows he is in trouble if he forgets. I put a lot of pressure on him."

"BILLY McKINLAY IS OUR FIRST-TEAM COACH AT FULHAM AND GORDON McQUEEN WAS MY FIRST-TEAM COACH AT MIDDLESBROUGH SO I KNOW ABOUT THE SCOTS."

Schwarzer expects to be put under some pressure himself tonight.

Having played most of his career in England, the big keeper has come across plenty of Scots and has been constantly reminded about Scotland's passion for football but he insists Australia will be every bit as keen as the home side to win tonight.

While the visit of Australia represents Scotland's last chance to get things right before the World Cup qualifiers begin in September, the Socceroos have already played two qualifying games and are in third place behind Japan and Iraq, in a section that also includes Oman and Jordan, with two points from two games.

"The Scots are a feisty bunch, very passionate about their football and very determined," said Schwarzer.

"Billy McKinlay is our first-team coach at Fulham and Gordon McQueen was my first-team coach at Middlesbrough so I know about the Scots.

"It is an important game for us because we have a World Cup qualifier against Jordan in September.

"And I am looking forward to playing at Easter Road. Hampden is a great venue but I like travelling to different places to play. Edinburgh is an historic city and it is always good to play in a country where people are passionate about the game. But wherever the game is being played, I hope to get a good result for Australia." ■

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BARRIER TO BRAZIL

STV SPORT'S ANDY COYLE ANALYSES THE FIVE TEAMS STANDING IN THE WAY OF SCOTLAND'S BID TO REACH THE WORLD CUP FINALS IN 2014.

PELE SCORED HIS FIRST INTERNATIONAL GOAL WHEN BRAZIL BEAT WALES 1-0 IN THE 1958 WORLD CUP QUARTER-FINALS.

WALES TOPPED THEIR QUALIFYING GROUP FOR THE 1976 EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIP BUT LOST TO YUGOSLVIA IN A PLAY-OFF TO REACH THE FOUR-TEAM FINALS.

FORMER EVERTON GOALKEEPER NEVILLE SOUTHALL HOLDS THE APPEARANCE RECORD WITH 92 CAPS.

WALES HAS 173,500 FOOTBALL PLAYERS, ACCORDING TO FIFA, AND 80,000 RUGBY UNION PLAYERS, ACCORDING TO THE IRB.

WALES

Unarguably the strongest of the teams in pot six that Scotland could have drawn. Wales is only a short journey away but while familiar, their high-profile players will pose a threat to any side in the group.

It seems inexplicable that Wales were seeded alongside the likes of Liechtenstein, San Marino and Andorra in the qualifying draw but despite some notable results in recent years, the Dragons have suffered from the spiral that sees each drop in the rankings ensure tougher opposition in subsequent draws.

This time, though bottom seeds, Wales will be looking to show that their ranking is irrelevant and that they have the players to cause an upset.

The group is still coming to terms with the tragic death of manager Gary Speed last year and his successor Chris Coleman will be looking to build on the work that Speed had undertaken, moulding a talented group into an effective unit.

Adam Matthews and Joe Ledley won the SPL with Celtic last year

CHRIS COLEMAN

AARON RAMSEY

and Craig Bellamy had a spell at Parkhead before returning south. Having returned to Cardiff after playing a major role for Team GB at the Olympics, the striker may be nearing the end of his career but is still a quality player.

Captain at only 21 years old, Arsenal midfielder Aaron Ramsey made terrific strides forward last season and Scotland fans will remember only too well his outstanding performance against George Burley's side when Wales won 3-0 in Cardiff in 2009.

Also certain to catch the eye is Tottenham star Gareth Bale. An outstanding attacking player on the left, his all-round ability saw him named in UEFA's team of the year for 2011 and having committed his future to White Hart Lane, he will be determined to improve his already stellar reputation for club and country this season.

AUSTRALIA PLAYER PROFILES

>> By Davide Corran

HOLGER OSIECK

MANAGER
BORN
DOB

An assistant to Franz Beckenbauer when Germany won the 1990 World Cup, Osieck has seen his greatest achievements as a head coach come outside of European football.

In 2000 he led Canada to a surprise Gold Cup success before an impressive Asian Champions League win with Japanese giants Urawa Reds in 2007.

Instilling the Socceroos with a more proactive approach than his predecessor Pim Verbeek has won Osieck a lot of support amongst the green and gold fan base.

A tactically flexible coach who has spent time on FIFA's technical committee, so far Osieck is on track to fulfil his main task of qualifying Australia for the 2014 World Cup.

CHRIS HERD

DEFENDER
BORN
DOB
CLUB
CAPS GOALS

A versatile player who is a graduate of Aston Villa's academy, this will be Herd's first Socceroos camp after having to withdraw on two previous occasions due to injury.

Herd made his Premier League debut against Manchester United in 2010 but his breakthrough season came in the last campaign where he featured as a regular member of Alex McLeish's side.

The 23 year-old could easily have ended up on the other side of this international fixture as he was also eligible to represent Scotland, who kept track of his progress before Herd eventually settled on the country of his birth.

SCOTSMAN JIMMY MACKAY SCORED THE GOAL THAT TOOK AUSTRALIA TO THEIR FIRST WORLD CUP FINALS, IN 1974, WITH A THUNDERBOLT IN A PLAY OFF DECIDER AGAINST SOUTH KOREA.

MARK SCHWARZER

GOALKEEPER
BORN
DOB
CLUB
CAPS GOALS

Even though Schwarzer is approaching his 40th birthday the Fulham goalkeeper continues to enjoy some of the best form of his career.

A 15-year career in the English Premier League has only been matched by phenomenal success with the national team where he's already earned 98 caps and made two World Cup appearances.

At the 2014 World Cup Schwarzer will be 41, but he is determined to make it to Brazil. After a most two decades in the national set up the fire still burns for an icon of Australian football.

SCOTT McDONALD

STRIKER
BORN
DOB
CLUB
CAPS GOALS

A player who will be familiar with Scottish football followers thanks to a successful stint at Celtic where he scored 51 goals in 88 appearances for the Glasgow giants, McDonald now plays under Tony Mowbray at Middlesbrough.

An excellent finisher with a penchant for goals, McDonald prefers to play alongside another striker. This has seen him struggle at times with the national team where he's often deployed as a lone striker.

McDonald's quest for his first national team goal is famous amongst Socceroos fans, but after missing out on the World Cup squad in 2010, the 28-year-old is determined to be a part of the Socceroos setup through to Brazil in 2014.

LUKE WILKSHIRE

DEFENDER
BORN
DOB
CLUB
CAPS GOALS

From being a shock call up for Australia's 2006 World Cup squad, Wilkshire has become one of the Socceroos' most dependable players.

His consistent performances eventually won over the doubters in Australia and it's no surprise Wilkshire has been a regular starter at every club he's been at since.

An all round player with the ability to play anywhere along the right side of the pitch or as a central midfielder, Wilkshire's deep crosses from right back have become a staple of this Australian side.

The first of his countrymen to play in Russia, Wilkshire will be a key part of the Socceroos' quest for a third straight World Cup spot.

SASA OGNENOVSKI

DEFENDER
BORN
DOB
CLUB
CAPS GOALS

At both club and international level Ognenovski has been a late bloomer.

After a couple of years in the semi-professional state leagues, in 2006 the then 27-year-old finally arrived on the Australian A-League scene when he signed for Brisbane Roar. A stellar few years in the A-League saw Ognenovski make a big money move to Seongnam in South Korea.

However a national team call up didn't come for Ognenovski until he was 31 but since then he's been a regular starter alongside Lucas Neill in the centre of defence.

Now playing his club football in Qatar, Ognenovski hopes to end what has been a remarkable rise with an appearance at the 2014 World Cup in Brazil.

AUSTRALIA MIDFIELDER MATT McKAY MADE THREE APPEARANCES FOR RANGERS BEFORE LEAVING FOR BUSAN IPARK IN FEBRUARY

BRETT HOLMAN

MIDFIELD
BORN
DOB
CLUB
CAPS GOALS

A dream move to English Premier League side Aston Villa over the summer has been the crowning achievement in a remarkable couple of years for Holman.

Before the 2010 World Cup he was one of the Australian public's least popular players, yet two goals in South Africa and a string of excellent performances for club and country have changed that.

Now Holman remains highly recognised as a key Socceroo who also has the unique ability within the national team setup to play between the lines, linking midfield and attack.

TIM CAHILL SCORED AUSTRALIA'S FIRST GOAL AT A WORLD CUP FINALS WITH A LAST-MINUTE EQUALISER AGAINST JAPAN IN 2006. JOHN ALOISI SCORED THEIR SECOND MOMENTS LATER.

FOOTBALL FEDERATION AUSTRALIA

SCOTT McDONALD, PROLIFIC WITH MOTHERWELL AND CELTIC, HAS NOT SCORED AN INTERNATIONAL GOAL IN 25 APPEARANCES

LUCAS NEILL

DEFENDER
BORN
DOB
CLUB
CAPS GOALS

As captain of the Socceroos, Neill is one of the team's most experienced players.

After spending 15 years working his way up the ranks of English football, Neill has added time in Turkey and more recently the Middle East to his resume.

While there's been a high turnover in wide partners in the middle of defence, Neill's experience and excellent decision making has ensured he continues to be a permanent fixture in the Australian set up.

Despite being a central defender, the 34-year-old is still hoping to finally net his first international goal.

ARCHIE THOMPSON SCORED 13 GOALS IN A 31-0 VICTORY OVER SAMOA IN A QUALIFIER FOR THE 2002 WORLD CUP

ADAM FEDERICI

GOALKEEPER
BORN
DOB
CLUB
CAPS GOALS

There have been high hopes for Federici ever since he was identified for the Australian Institute of Sport's development program as a teenager. Now that potential is starting to be realised.

At 27-years-old, he's starting to come into his own as a goalkeeper and was a key component of the Reading team that won promotion to the English Premier League last season.

Mark Schwarzer might remain the Socceroos' number 1, but in Federici Australia have a ready-made replacement for the Fulham goalkeeper when he finally calls time on his career.

PHYS WILLIAMS

DEFENDER
BORN
DOB
CLUB
CAPS GOALS

One of a fresh batch of players to come out of Western Australia, Williams is a tall, quick and skilful player who fits in both at right back and as a central midfielder.

Another big Socceroos prospect playing in England, injury has held Williams back from cementing his place in Australia's starting XI and robbed him of a spot at the World Cup in South Africa.

Despite repeated links with a number of Premier League clubs, Williams signed a new deal with Middlesbrough earlier this year and is poised for a big season at both club and international level.

AUSTRALIA'S FIRST WORLD CUP QUALIFYING ATTEMPT ENDED WITH A 9-2 AGGREGATE DEFEAT BY NORTH KOREA IN 1965. THEIR OPPONENTS FAMOUSLY BEAT ITALY IN THE FINALS.

MILE JEDINAK

MIDFIELDER
BORN
DOB
CLUB
CAPS GOALS

Now 28-years-old and playing for English Championship side Crystal Palace, it's hard to believe that six years ago Jedinak was struggling to find a club willing to give him a chance.

A fantastic run of form in the Australian A-League led to a move to Turkey before former Palace and Australian great Tony Popovic brought him across to the London based club.

A holding midfielder, Jedinak's best assets are his physical presence and ability to break down opposition attacks. He's also been known for his knack at scoring long-range screamers.

A FRIENDLY IN THEIR FIRST MATCH AT EASTER ROAD ON FEBRUARY 4, 1893 THE LEITH GROUND'S R

CARL VALERI

MIDFIELDER
BORN CANBERRA
DOB 14/8/1984
CLUB SASSUOLO
CAPS 47 GOALS 1

After originally signing for Inter Milan's youth team, Valeri has taken the long route to the top starting in the lower divisions of Italian football.

Two unsuccessful playoff promotion attempts in three years with Serie B side Sassuolo means Valeri's dream of Serie A football hasn't been realised just yet.

However this mobile central midfielder is in his prime as a player and is a Socceroos staple since emerging at the 2010 World Cup.

Having just signed a new deal with Sassuolo and seen the birth of his second child, things are going pretty well for one of the Socceroos' quiet achievers.

NEIL KILKENNY

MIDFIELDER
BORN MIDDLESEX, ENGLAND
DOB 19/12/1985
CLUB BRISTOL CITY
CAPS 15 GOALS 0

Currently playing for Bristol City, Kilkenny's journey into English football began as a teenager in the Arsenal academy before moving on to Birmingham, Oldham and Leeds.

A central midfielder with great technique who likes to set the tempo of a game, Kilkenny represented Australia at the Beijing Olympics in 2008.

Holger Osieck is a big admirer of the 26-year-old and while he doesn't always make the starting line-up, he remains a regular in the national team set-up.

FORMER ST MIRREN PAIR BILLY MEHMET AND STEVEN McGARRY, PLUS EX-CELTIC MIDFIELDER LIAM MILLER, WERE ON THE LOSING SIDE IN THE A-LEAGUE GRAND FINAL AS IAN FERGUSON'S PERTH GLORY LOST TO BRISBANE ROAR.

ROBBIE KRUSE

STRIKER
BORN BRISBANE
DOB 5/10/1985
CLUB FORTUNA DUSSELDORF
CAPS 17 GOALS 2

At one point in his career Kruse was falling into the trap of a wayward talent with untapped potential. A move from Brisbane Roar to Melbourne Victory allowed him to refocus and before long European football and a national team call up beckoned.

A quick forward who likes to run at goal with the ball at his feet, Kruse, who now plays for newly promoted Bundesliga side Fortuna Dusseldorf, only managed a handful of appearances in his first season in Germany.

The 23-year-old expects his experience over the last 12 months will leave him better prepared for the increased intensity of European football, which can only help his young Socceroos career.

THE SOCCEROOS BEAT BRAZIL 1-0 ON THEIR WAY TO A THIRD-PLACE FINISH IN THE 2002 CONFEDERATIONS CUP.

MARK BRESCIANO

MIDFIELDER
BORN MELBOURNE
DOB 11/2/1980
CLUB AL GHARAFFA (QATAR)
CAPS 61 GOALS 11

The scorer of some of the Socceroos' most iconic goals, Bresciano took a couple years off from the national team after a difficult World Cup in South Africa.

Having become almost forgotten at national team level, Bresciano burst back onto the international scene with a scintillating performance in a 4-2 win over Saudi Arabia in February.

A fantastic passer of the ball, the 32-year-old's Socceroos return appears to have ended Osieck's search for a central midfielder who can dictate the tempo of a game.

Bresciano will be hoping to end a marvellous career that included twelve years in Italy's Serie A with a trip to the World Cup in Brazil.

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GRANT HANLEY	BLACKBURN ROVERS	☐	☐
ALAN HUTTON	ASTON VILLA	☐	☐
SHAUN MALONEY	WIGAN ATHLETIC	☐	☐
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ANDY WEBSTER	HEART OF MIDLOTHIAN	☐	☐

		XI	S
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MILE JEDINAK	CRYSTAL PALACE	☐	☐
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